PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 80

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1984-85

COMPRISING PERIOD
3 JUNE—14 JUNE 1985

LONDON
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
£40·95 net

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY RIGHT HON. MARGARET THATCHER, MP, SEPTEMBER 1984)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—
The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. Viscount Whitelaw, CH, MC
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone, CH
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS—The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Leon Brittan, QC, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Nigel Lawson, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph, Bt, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Walker, MBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. George Younger, TD, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Edwards, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT—The Rt. Hon. Patrick Jenkin, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES—The Rt. Hon. Norman Fowler, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—The Rt. Hon. Michael Jopling, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Rees, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER (MINISTER FOR THE ARTS)—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Gowrie
MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Young of Graffham

LAW OFFICERS

ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Havers, QC, MP
LORD ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Cameron of Lochbroom, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Peter Fraser, Esq, QC, MP

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—John Gummer, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE—
The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Young
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. Timothy Raison, MP
Malcolm Rifkind, Esq, MP
Richard Luce, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, HOME OFFICE—
David Waddington, Esq, QC, MP
Giles Shaw, Esq, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—John Moore, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, TREASURY—Barney Hayhoe, Esq, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—Ian Stewart, Esq, RD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. Alick Buchanan-Smith, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE—
Minister of State for the Armed Forces—The Rt. Hon. John Stanley, MP
Minister of State for Defence Procurement—The Rt. Hon. Adam Butler, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, SCOTTISH OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Gray of Contin
MINISTER OF STATE, WELSH OFFICE—John Stradling Thomas, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT—
Minister for Local Government—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
Minister for Housing and Construction—Ian Gow, Esq, MP
Minister of State—The Lord Elton, TD
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY—
Minister for Health—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
Minister for Social Security—Antony Newton, Esq, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY—
Minister for Trade—The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP
Minister of State—Norman Lamont, Esq. MP
Minister for Information Technology—Geoffrey Pattie, Esq., MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT—The Hon. Peter Morrison, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
John MacGregor, Esq. MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT—Mrs. Lynda Chalker, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—Dr. Rhodes Boyson, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—
MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. Michael Jopling, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
John MacGregor, Esq. MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—Mrs. Peggy Fenner, MP

Arts and Libraries, Office of—
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER (MINISTER FOR THE ARTS)—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Gowrie

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—
The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Gowrie

Defence—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Rt. Hon. John Stanley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—The Rt. Hon. Adam Butler, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Lord Trefgarne
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—John Lee, Esq. MP

Education and Science—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph, Bt. MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
Robert Dunn, Esq. MP

Employment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Hon. Peter Morrison, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Hon. Alan Clark, MP
Peter Bottomley, Esq. MP

Energy—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Walker, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Alick Buchanan-Smith, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Alastair Goodlad, Esq. MP
David Hunt, Esq. MP

Environment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Patrick Jenkin, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Local Government—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
Minister for Housing and Construction—Ian Gow, Esq. MP
Minister of State—The Lord Elton TD
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Neil Macfarlane, Esq. MP
Sir George Young, Bt. MP
The Hon. William Waldegrave, MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Young
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. Timothy Raison, MP
Malcolm Rifkind, Esq. MP
Richard Luce, Esq. MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Timothy Renton, Esq. MP

Health and Social Security—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES—The Rt. Hon. Norman Fowler, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Health—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
Minister for Social Security—Antony Newton, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
John Patten, Esq, MP
Ray Whitney, Esq, MP
The Baroness Trumpington

Home Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Leon Brittan, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
David Waddington, Esq, QC, MP
Giles Shaw Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
David Mellor, Esq, MP
The Lord Glenarthur

Law Officers' Department—
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Havers, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Cameron of Lochbroom, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Peter Fraser, Esq, QC, MP

Lord Chancellor—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hailsham of Saint Marylebone, CH

Management and Personnel Office—
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Gowrie

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Dr. Rhodes Boyson, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Nicholas Scott, Esq, MBE, MP
Christopher Patten, Esq, MP
The Lord Lyell

Paymaster General—John Gummer, Esq, MP

Privy Council Office—
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. Viscount Whitelaw, CH, MC
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP

Scottish Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. George Younger, TD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Gray of Contin
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Allan Stewart, Esq, MP
John MacKay, Esq, MP
Michael Ancram, Esq, MP

Trade and Industry—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Trade—The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP
Minister of State—Norman Lamont, Esq, MP
Minister for Information Technology—Geoffrey Pattie, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
John Butcher, Esq, MP
Alexander Fletcher, Esq, MP
David Trippier, Esq, MP
Lord Lucas of Chilworth

Transport—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Mrs. Lynda Chalker, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
David Mitchell, Esq, MP
Michael Spicer, Esq, MP

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Nigel Lawson, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Rees, QC, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—John Moore, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Barney Hayhoe, Esq, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Ian Stewart, Esq, RD, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
Donald Thompson, Esq, MP
Ian Lang, Esq, MP
Tristan Garel-Jones, Esq, MP
The Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
John Major, Esq, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
Michael Neubert, Esq, MP
The Hon. Timothy Sainsbury, MP
Tony Durant, Esq, MP
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP
The Hon. Mark Lennox-Boyd, MP

Welsh Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Edwards, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—John Stradling Thomas, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Wyn Roberts, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—The Rt. Hon. The Duke of Northumberland, KG, TD
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Westmorland, KCVO
TREASURER—John Cope, Esq, MP
COMPTROLLER—Carol Mather, Esq, MC, MP
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—The Hon. Robert Boscawen, MC, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Denham
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—The Earl of Swinton
LORDS IN WAITING— The Viscount Long, The Lord Skelmersdale, The Earl of Caithness, The Lord Brabazon of Tara
BARONESS IN WAITING—The Baroness Cox

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—Sir William van Straubenzee, MBE, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—Rt. Hon. Bernard Weatherill, MP
CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Rt. Hon. Harold Walker, MP
FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Rt. Hon. Ernest Armstrong, MP
SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Sir Paul Dean, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—
Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP, Ian Campbell, Esq, MP, Donald Coleman, Esq, MP, Patrick Cormack, Esq, MP, David Crouch, Esq, MP, Stan Crowther, Esq, MP, Miss Janet Fookes, MP, John Forrester, Esq, MP, Harry Gourlay, Esq, MP, Sir Philip Holland, MP, John Hunt, Esq, MP, David Knox, Esq, MP, James Lamond, Esq, MP, Ted Leadbitter, Esq, MP, Hugh McCartney, Esq, MP, Sir Anthony Meyer, MP, Michael Morris, Esq, MP, Sir Michael Shaw, MP, Michael Shersby, Esq, MP, John Spence, Esq, MP, Sir John Wells, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—
Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), Alan Beith, Esq, MP, Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP, Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP, Sir Paul Bryan, DSO, MC, MP, Rt. Hon. Peter Shore, MP

SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION—R. B. Sands

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—W. A. Beaumont, OBE, AE
SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—T. R. F. Skemp, CB, QC, G. E. Gammie, CB
SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon T. Beeson
STAFF INSPECTOR—H. W. Bunkell
SPEAKER'S ASSISTANT SECRETARY (ADMINISTRATION)—R. J. Canter, MBE
SPEAKER'S ASSISTANT SECRETARY (PARLIAMENTARY)—D. J. Lord
SPEAKER'S COUNSEL OFFICE—HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—T. D. Salmon
SPEAKER'S TRAINBEARER—P. L. Warwick

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—D. W. Robson

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—K. A. Bradshaw, CB
CLERK ASSISTANT—C. J. Boulton
CLERK OF COMMITTEES—D. A. M. Pring, CB, MC
PRINCIPAL CLERKS—
J. H. Willcox (Public Bills)
R. S. Lankester (Select Committees)
D. W. Limon (Table Office)
H. M. Barclay (Private Bills)
M. T. Ryle (Journal Office)
J. F. Sweetman, TD (Overseas Office)
A. A. Barrett (Standing Committees)
C. B. Winnifrith (Select Committees)
W. R. McKay (Financial Committees)
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS—J. R. Rose, A. J. Hastings, R. J. Willoughby, S. A. L. Panton, R. B. Sands, G. Cubie, M. R. Jack, PhD, D. G. Millar, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms. A. Milner-Barry, R. W. G. Wilson, W. A. Proctor, F. A. Cranmer, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, Ms. H. E. Irwin, D. W. N. Doig
SENIOR CLERKS—R. J. Rogers, A. Sandall, MLitt, M. H. Cooper, PhD, D. L. Natzler, D. J. Cairncross, E. P. Silk, Mrs. S. A. de Ste. Croix, A. R. Kennon, D. W. Robson, L. C. Laurence Smyth, A. R. Gren, S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, C. J. Poyser, D. F. Harrison, S. J. Priestley, C. P. R. Bennett, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans, R. I. S. Phillips, P. D. Brittain (acting), F. W. Clark (acting), C. A. Larsen (acting), J. C. McDowell (acting), J. Hallowell (acting)
ASSISTANT CLERKS—R. G. James, Miss E. J. Baker, C. M. H. Wookey, Miss P. A. Helme, D. R. Lloyd, R. A. Lambert
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—E. F. Riddles
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—C. L. Watson, K. J. Brown, G. E. Clayton, L. L. Kaye, I. C. Bryan, Miss R. J. Challis, A. P. Hubner, Miss S. J. Fox
SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS— G. S. Halliday, I. S. Orton, Miss H. C. Beaumont, Miss J. Ward, R. A. Wilkins
EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—G. H. Bright DEPUTY—B. Tidball ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, Miss L. Lewis, J. Puricelli, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, K. B. Wood
EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—H. M. Barclay, J. M. Davies
REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—R. S. Lankester
TAXING OFFICER—H. M. Barclay
CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—R. A. Broomfield, P. G. Moon, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, Mrs. J. Pickett, J. D. Whatley, S. D. Barrett, M. Clark, Miss A. M. Loader

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Major G. V. S. Le Fanu
DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—Major P. N. W. Jennings
ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright
CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss M. Frampton, MBE
ASSISTANT CLERK IN CHARGE—D. W. Snell
ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—E. D. Palfrey, A. Chipperfield, BEM, Mrs. S. J. Warren
PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—J. Blood
SECOND PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—G. H. Sargeant
THIRD PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—S. E. R. Skinner
HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—W. H. Hazard SECOND OFFICE KEEPER—M. Bryant
NURSING SISTER—Miss E. Needham

DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—D. Menhennet, DPhil.
DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—D. J. T. Englefield
LIBRARY—
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS—H. J. Palmer, G. F. Lock
DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS—M. A. Griffith-Jones, J. B. Poole, PhD, Miss J. B. Tanfield, S. Z. Young, Mrs. H. R. Coates, Miss P. J. Baines, BLitt, K. G. Cuninghame, Mrs. J. Wainwright, MI InfSc
SENIOR LIBRARY CLERKS—Miss E. K. Andrews, DPhil, Mrs. B. L. Miller, Mrs. J. M. Lourie, Ms. F. Poole, Mrs. C. B. Andrews, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick, C. C. Pond, PhD, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. C. M. Gillie, Miss C. E. Nield, R. C. Clements, R. Ware, DPhil, Ms. D. Gore, PhD, R. J. Twigger, B. K. Winetrobe, Mrs. J. Lee, T. N. Edmonds, R. J. Cracknell
ASSISTANT LIBRARY CLERK—Miss O. Gay
SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Miss M. R. O'Reilly, MBE, Miss R. Wheatman, ALA, Mrs. S. Withers, ALA
SENIOR INFORMATION CLERKS—Miss E. Osborn, Mrs. D. Clark, ALA, Mrs. E. Stones (Education Officer)
HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. H. V. Holden, ALA, J. Prince, MLS, ALA, Mrs. P. V. Wiles, ALA, M. Southgate, Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Miss M. Fletcher, ALA, Miss J. Seaton, FLA, Miss G. C. Howarth, ALA, K. Parry, ALA, Miss A. Siswell, Mrs. E. Houghton, ALA, Ms. V. R. Cattell, Mrs. S. M. Hingley, ALA, Ms. A. Muir
LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, Mrs. I. Stockton, ALA, Miss E. Jones, ALA, G. Haig, Ms. H. Armstrong, ALA, Mrs. P. Cook, ALA, Mrs. J. Skipworth, Miss B. Mee, Miss G. Cooper
SUPERINTENDING CLERK—J. Hutson
CHIEF OFFICE CLERK—T. Haclin, D. Plowright
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss M. A. Stewart, J. Youle, P. Davis, J. Came, S. Wise, Mrs. P. Bozdan

VOTE OFFICE—
DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—G. R. Russell
DEPUTY DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster
ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney
SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—C. J. Montgomery, C. D. Lister

SALE OFFICE—CHIEF OFFICE CLERK—C. C. Clarke, MBE

ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT—H. McE. Allen, CB
FEES OFFICE—
ACCOUNTANT—J. L. G. Dobson
DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—A. J. Lewis
SENIOR ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—G. P. Brown (Temp.)
ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—F. W. Brewer, A. R. Marskell, M. J. Barram, A. C. Langford, MBE (Temp.) Miss M. M. McColl (Temp.)
DEPUTY ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—K. E. Johnson, R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell, Mrs. P. D. Page, Mrs. J. Yexley, R. S. Young (Temp.), Mrs. N. Norman (Temp.), Miss G. Hooks (Temp.), D. A. Tucker (Temp.)
CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—Miss D. E. Johnson, Miss T. D. Ruewell (Temp.), Mrs. D. K. P. Simons (Temp.), Mrs. D. Hill, Miss P. Hurford (Temp.), Mrs. J. C. Ponting (Temp.), B. W. Palmer (Temp.), Miss J. Bell (Temp.)

ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—
HEAD OF OFFICE—A. C. J. Poole
DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb
ASSISTANT HEAD OF OFFICE—D. J. Mouat
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Mrs. S. Caird-Lawrence
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Miss R. A. Cole
SUPERINTENDING CLERK—P. C. Kingsley
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. S. Harrison, Miss J. Bremner

COMPUTER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc
ASSISTANT COMPUTER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER—Mrs. G. S. P. Smith

INTERNAL AUDITOR—Miss C. D. Stone, FCCA

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—K. S. Morgan
DEPUTY EDITOR—L. R. Johns
PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—R. V. Hadlow, J. Gourley
SENIOR ASSISTANT EDITORS—F. G. Brotherston, C. R. G. Watson, OBE
ASSISTANT EDITOR—P. Walker
DEPUTY ASSISTANT EDITORS—E. Holland, I. D. Church
COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS—J. Withers, W. G. Garland, F. I. Williams, Miss V. Grainger, J. Ledgerwood, D. Crosswell, Miss C. Ritchie, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, Mrs. A. Roberts, Miss H. A. Hales
REPORTERS—Miss L. Sutherland, Mrs. E. J. Gregory, Mrs. P. Pratt, Miss V. A. Widgery, S. M. Hutchinson, J. Robinson, Miss C. Fogarty, Mrs. J. Ballard, Miss H. Thompson, Miss M. Babington, Miss C. G. Black, P. Oglethorpe, Miss C. Hanly, Miss A. Harris, J. Bonner, Miss J. K. Belcher
FIRST PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—D. N. Harrington
SECOND PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—Mrs. E. M. Bangay
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—Mrs. H. Stollery
CHIEF HANSARD ASSISTANT—D. J. Lawler
HANSARD ASSISTANT—Miss R. Washington
ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—H. J. Wellings

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

GENERAL MANAGER—W. J. J. Smillie, FHCIMA, FCFA, ACF
DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER—E. J. Nash, MCFA
PERSONNEL OFFICER—Mrs. B. D. Bulley
PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO GENERAL MANAGER—Mrs. A. G. Lunn
BANQUETING SUPERVISOR—C. J. Griffiths
CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA
ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley
EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay
HEAD CELLARMAN—D. Balcombe
HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland
PARLIAMENTARY WORKS OFFICER (PSA)—W. H. Lewis, OBE
HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent I. K. Slessor
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—D. Todd
POSTMASTER—C. E. Tomkins
TRANSPORT MANAGER—Miss M. F. Ward

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 80**

FOURTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1984-85

House of Commons

Monday 3 June 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

C-POULTRY COMPANY LIMITED BILL
Considered; to be read the Third time.

DURHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*
Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

British Gas Corporation

1. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of the British Gas Corporation to discuss the proposed privatisation of the corporation.

4. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to be in a position to announce a target date for the privatisation of British Gas.

6. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received on the future of British Gas.

18. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on progress with the proposed privatisation of British Gas.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): I have regular meetings with the chairman of the British Gas Corporation. Government policy on the privatisation of BGC was set out in my statement to the House on 7 May.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Secretary of State accept that many of us fear that if, and when, the British Gas Corporation is privatised it will seek to maximise sales and push up demand to increase profits? Will the right hon. Gentleman discuss with the chairman of the corporation possible statutory duties on any privatised board to take full account of conservation efforts and, in particular, to consider demand management as much an option as other sources of supply?

Mr. Walker: The British Gas Corporation would have a vested interest in ensuring that there were sensible policies to ensure that the supply of gas was always available. That would be very much in the corporation's mind.

Sir William van Straubenzee: Does my right hon. Friend appreciate the fact that my request for a target date illustrates the impatience that many of us feel and our hope of seeing his industry in the private sector? Will he therefore do all that he can to bring the date forward, in the hope that there will then be widespread ownership among those who work in the industry?

Mr. Walker: I very much admire my hon. Friend's volunteering to serve on the Committee stage of this legislation. I know that he will help us to expedite the passage of the measure. The proposal has been widely welcomed by employers, customers and others. I hope that it will reach the statute book and be implemented as quickly as possible.

Mr. Nellist: Is this not just the latest action in all the all-too-long line of handouts and bribes to the millionaire backers of the Tory party and which has absolutely nothing to do with increased efficiency, increased democracy or a better deal for gas consumers? Is it not a fact that £5 billion has been raised through special gas price increases and that it is due for transfer from the public purse to the bank balances of the sharks and speculators represented by

the Secretary of State for Energy? Those people will lose that money on renationalisation of the British Gas Corporation.

Mr. Walker: In my reply to the previous question I expressed the hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenezee) would remain a firm supporter of the proposal. I also hope that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) will remain a firm opponent of it. The hon. Gentleman's opposition is, as always, primitive and totally incorrect. He should talk to some of the employees of industries which have been privatised and see how many of them have any desire to go back to nationalisation.

Mr. Skeet: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his privatisation proposals. However, will he bear in mind, as the monopoly moves into the private sector, the need to safeguard the raw materials of the chemical industry—ethane and other materials—so that they have a ready flow and are competitive on world markets?

Mr. Walker: I do not think that there will be any difficulties about that. The British Gas Corporation is anxious to do that in connection with its customers. The 1982 legislation and the proposed legislation will enable such organisations to make those supplies.

Mr. Hoyle: Has the Secretary of State any plans to meet the chairmen of other nationalised industries, especially the chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority? Will he discuss with the authority's chairman the Exclusive Office Cleaning strike? Women cleaners' wages are being reduced by 21p an hour and their holidays are being reduced from four weeks to one week. Will the right hon. Gentleman take up this question with the authority?

Mr. Walker: That question is clearly a wide abuse of Question Time.

Mr. McQuarrie: While I delight with my right hon. Friend in the fact that privatisation is to go ahead as quickly as possible, may I ask whether he intends that Scottish gas should be a separate entity within that privatisation?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the regulatory arrangements for the prices charged by a denationalised corporation are of great importance not only to consumers but to the whole of the energy industry? Will he give a clear statement of how the regulatory framework and criteria for prices will work? Will they, for instance, be similar to those applying to British Telecom?

Mr. Walker: I hope the hon. Gentleman will understand that at this stage it is not possible to give detailed proposals, but there will be an effective regulatory system that will both protect the consumer and encourage the industry to improve its efficiency.

Mr. Watts: As no gas has been supplied direct from producer to customer making use of the common carrier provisions in the 1982 Act, is my right hon. Friend satisfied that no further measures are required to make those provisions more effective before the corporation is privatised?

Mr. Walker: I have said that we will keep this matter under review. Certainly the 1982 provisions are important and can be used to advantage, and I believe that that will happen in a number of cases. However, there is no doubt that the bulk of gas distribution will be through the present system operated by the corporation.

Mr. Orme: As this is a highly controversial matter, is the Secretary of State contemplating producing a White Paper before he produces a Bill?

Secondly, what consultation has the right hon. Gentleman had with employees of the corporation through their trade unions?

Mr. Walker: The answer to the first point is no.

On the right hon Gentleman's second point, representatives of an organisation representing all the unions involved asked to see me when our proposals were first made known, I wrote to them immediately after my announcement and asked if they would like to have a meeting—I should be only too delighted to have such a meeting—and I am awaiting a reply.

Heysham and Torness Power Stations

2. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what are the anticipated commissioning dates of the Heysham 2 and Torness power stations; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): The anticipated commissioning dates for the two reactors at Heysham 2 power station are mid-1987 and mid-1988, respectively. Matters relating to electricity supply in Scotland are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Proctor: Will my hon. Friend consult our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment concerning the disposal of Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate to Bootle against its wishes, which coincides with the receiving of the station safety reports from the CEGB to the inspectorate? Will he ensure that the safety aspects are considered in depth and that there will be no delay in the commissioning of power stations, because any delay will cost the nation about £250,000 per day per station?

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by the Health and Safety Commission that dispersal of the inspectorate will not have any implications for the anticipated commissioning dates of Heysham 2. The Government are conscious of the need to maintain the high standards of the inspectorate. The detailed arrangements for dispersal are a matter for the Health and Safety Executive. I understand that it does not believe that dispersal need have serious consequences for the effectiveness of the inspectorate.

Mr. Crouch: Will my hon. Friend assure us that before the Government reach a decision on the type of nuclear generation for the future they will wait to see the successful results of those two power stations in operation?

Mr. Goodlad: The relative merits of the AGR and PWR were exhaustively rehearsed at the Sizewell inquiry. In view of my right hon. Friend's quasi-judicial position, it would be wrong for me to comment further.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the National Coal Board took into consideration the commissioning of those two nuclear power stations when it set its target for the production of coal last year?

Mr. Goodlad: I believe that that was the case.

Wind Power

3. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps his Department has taken to promote the use of wind power for energy purposes.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): My Department has spent over £13 million, since 1979, on research and development into the use of wind energy for electricity generation.

Mr. Yeo: Can my right hon. Friend say whether the expenditure has revealed any useful applications for wind energy and, if so, whether such applications have any export potential?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Yes, it is one of our most promising areas in using a renewable energy source. The work done so far in the Orkney Islands has proved effective. In relation to the second medium-sized aero-generator that we have there, the firm concerned is already exploring the possibilities of selling its equipment overseas, so there are good opportunities.

Mr. Colvin: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are firms in my constituency which are now well into wind power technology, both ashore and afloat, through wind-assist schemes for ships? Will he take the opportunity to pay credit to Gifford Technology, which is already exporting epoxy timber composite windmill blades to the United States of America, where it is said that one of the main incentives to people buying the new technology is the tax credit system which the Americans use, which might be a better form of encouragement to British firms to invest in wind power than the present encouragement given by our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: A considerable number of firms are involved in the Orkney Islands development and in Carmarthen Bay, and the developments are of benefit to them. My hon. Friend's point relates to the responsibility of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I take note of what he said.

Coal Industry

8. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether, when he next meets the chairman of the National Coal Board, he will discuss the future potential for coal extraction under the sea off the north-east coast of England.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I am aware of the prospects for further development of coal mines under the sea in north-east England, and expect to discuss these with the chairman of the National Coal Board from time to time as the board's plans develop.

Mr. Beith: Does the Minister agree that the closure of old pits with expensive production costs will prove to have been a disaster if it is not accompanied by new investment in areas with high potential, such as the North sea? Will he note that the sinking of a new pit in the Amble area could give access to enormous reserves and be of tremendous value in creating employment in that area?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question. I was very pleased when, on 26 April, the north-east area of the NCB announced approval for a £3 million drilling rig for Westoe, Wearmouth and Ellington collieries. I was very pleased to hear about that when I went underground at Ellington just over two weeks ago.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is good potential for the extraction of coal in the north-east only if there are markets for that coal? In that respect, the coal conversion scheme is very important. Can he say how that scheme has been progressing since the strike, in the hope of expanding markets?

Mr. Hunt: Sadly, the shadow of the NACODS position still hangs over the coal industry. Nevertheless, there is still a very good argument for industry to convert to coal, and there is still a useful amount of money in the coal conversion scheme. My hon. Friend is absolutely correct in what he said.

Mr. Mason: When the Minister next meets the chairman of the National Coal Board, will he draw his attention to the severe breakdown in industrial relations in the coalfields, caused particularly by the stupid and outdated attitude of the chairman and his deputy, Cowan? Will the Minister also mention the reports that local trade union officials are working five days a week underground and are put on a three-shift system, which makes it difficult to have good trade union relations at the pithead?

Will the Minister note that, having disturbed and misled NACODS, the country is now hovering once more on the brink of a national strike? What will the Minister and the Secretary of State do to rectify and get a grip on the position?

Mr. Hunt I hope that when the right hon. Gentleman is able to consider carefully what he has just said he will recognise that it was extremely wrong and in bad taste for him to use that inflammatory language at such a crucial stage—*[Interruption.]*—in the present situation. I ask him to take time to go underground, as I have done at Point of Ayr, at Ellington and at Selby—*[Interruption.]*—and he will hear from the men underground that all that they want to do is to put the tragic strike behind them and to work together for the future of the industry.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would have been more appropriate if the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) had asked his supplementary question after the next question. However, he has his answer now.

Mr. Dormand: Is the Minister aware that the multi-million pound drilling project in the north-east has been generally welcomed? Will he urge the National Coal Board, when it talks about pit closures, to give full consideration to the fact that the reserves in the Durham coalfield have been established for some time? Some of that coal will easily be obtained. When the chairman of the National Coal Board talks about the economic aspects of pits, surely that is a matter that should receive the utmost consideration before further pit closures are thought about?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman is right to talk about extensive coal reserves, because last year the National Coal Board located at least 200 million tonnes of new reserves off Westoe and Wearmouth collieries and has spent about £15·5 million in the past 12 years drilling for coal in the North sea. A further £3 million will be spent this summer. He is also right to stress that the coal industry's future lies in the development of low-cost

productive pits, such as the massive Ellington complex. Of course, that has to be taken into account when allocating resources in the future.

National Coal Board

9. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to change the membership of the National Coal Board.

Mr. Peter Walker: No new appointments to the board are imminent.

Mr. Pike: Does the Secretary of State not recognise that, despite the answer given a few moments ago, most people in the industry and in the country are convinced that the National Coal Board was largely responsible for causing last year's dispute and is likely to cause a further dispute because of its apparent failure to comply with agreements that it has reached? Is it not time that changes were made so that the industry can start to go forward again?

Mr. Walker: No. I believe that most people agree that last year's strike was politically motivated and that it was one for which no ballot of miners took place.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Is my right hon. Friend aware that it is essential for the present membership of the NCB to be maintained and supported by him and the country in order to put the industry right? Will he take this opportunity to explain the difficulties which have arisen between the National Coal Board and NACODS?

Mr. Walker: After NACODS had a meeting last week, I was asked whether a meeting could take place with the National Coal Board. I conveyed its message to the NCB and a meeting took place at the invitation of the NCB. In accordance with its wishes, the matters that NACODS had asked to have clarified at its meeting with me were clarified completely at the meeting with the NCB. I hope, therefore, that NACODS members will quickly return to work.

Mr. Foot: Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that what was said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) represents the widespread feeling throughout all the coalfields that Mr. MacGregor, the chairman of the NCB, is utterly distrusted and that he is making a major contribution to the present dispute? We are all aware of the fact that the Secretary of State has had his disputes with Mr. MacGregor. Mr. MacGregor was insulting at the end of the dispute when he said that the Secretary of State had had nothing to do with the conduct of the dispute. That was misleading the country. We know that the Secretary of State never wanted him. Therefore, can he not now intervene and get rid of him?

Mr. Walker: No. At the majority of coalfields production has returned to normal levels and at many of them it is high. It is giving a completely distorted picture to say that there is great discontent throughout the coalfields. I am pleased to say that coal production and deliveries are reaching good levels at present. I am only sorry that damage is being done to the full recovery of the industry, which is necessary if we are to persuade industrialists and others to convert to coal in the future.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge the excellent work that the chairman of the NCB has put into securing export orders upon which a long-term future for the coal industry can be founded?

Mr. Walker: The marketing of coal is immensely important both at home and abroad and is something to which I hope the board will give ever-increasing attention.

Mr. Benn: Is not the truth that during the dispute the Secretary of State allowed pledges to be given on almost any terms to NACODS to get the dispute ended? Now that the current dispute is more than three months old, NACODS feels entirely betrayed by the chairman of the board and by the Government. The result of victimisation of miners and some of the savage sentences is that more and more people think that the NUM was correct in the defence that it mounted last year.

Mr. Walker: No, Sir. The opposite is the truth. The reality is that the agreement on modified procedures was virtually reached before the NACODS overtime ban took place and was entirely in accordance with procedures. It is also true that I met the NACODS leaders for two hours, when they asked for two matters to be fulfilled, both of which have been fulfilled.

Mr. Nellist: What sort of vindictiveness is it that causes the Secretary of State to refuse to allow the 700 sacked miners—11 of them in the area of Warwickshire which I represent—to return to their jobs? Is it not a fact——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a related question on this issue.

Mr. Nellist: Let me finish my supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must read the questions that appear on the Order Paper. Question No. 9 is about membership of the National Coal Board.

Mr. Nellist: Is it not a fact that the sackings——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is just the point. If the hon. Gentleman will read the question and relate it to the board, he will be all right. I shall give the hon. Gentlman one more chance.

Mr. Nellist: Is it not a fact that the board's membership means that the sackings were targeted at union organisers and that many of those who were sacked have been found not guilty in courts of law? Does that mean that the present membership of the board and the Secretary of State are setting themselves up as judge, jury and executioner?

Mr. Walker: There is a right of appeal in all cases. It would be pleasing if occasionally the hon. Gentleman showed some concern about the vindictiveness of some of those who have been sacked.

Mr. Orme: Does the Secretary of State agree that the NCB is responsible for the present NACODS' dispute? The board has violated the agreement and is demanning pits, such as Horden in the north-east and St. John's in south Wales. It is therefore getting round the agreement and allowing pits to be run down so that they can be closed. Is that not another example of the board's dubiety?

Mr. Walker: I wish that the right hon. Gentleman, with his keen enthusiasm for the future of the industry,

would recognise that when a pit has been virtually destroyed, because of the coal strike, and the majority of the men at the pit want to be transferred or to take voluntary retirement, it would be right for him to criticise the board if it ignored the views of the majority at that pit.

Coal Industry

10. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many miners have taken voluntary redundancy since 1 March.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am encouraged by the levels of production attained since the end of the strike, although damage to coal faces has had a lasting effect. Between the beginning of March and 4 May over 2,000 miners took voluntary redundancy, reducing the number of men on colliery books to approximately 169,000.

Mr. Nicholls: May I take that answer as meaning that working miners are now satisfied that their applications for voluntary redundancy or transfer are being processed speedily? Does my right hon. Friend agree that if earlier reports that miners were not satisfied that such applications were being processed speedily were justified, that would have reflected a substantial betrayal of a brave body of men?

Mr. Walker: It is up to the management to take decisions on the applications of individual miners. All the individual cases forwarded to me have been taken up by the board and have been dealt with satisfactorily by the management.

Mr. Ray Powell: Is the Minister aware that at the St. John's colliery 350 miners have volunteered for redundancy payments as a result of two years of threatening closure by the National Coal Board and the Minister? The Minister, in response to an Adjournment debtate that I initiated, said that investigations would take place. Is he aware that the chairman of the board condones actions by the board and by its officers to put pressure on miners to volunteer to become redundant?

Mr. Walker: I do not agree. Any closure will be dealt with under the proper, agreed procedure.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as about 14,000 miners have now accepted voluntary retirement, there was no need for the dispute in the first place, Arthur Scargill was completely wrong, and the Government were right in supporting the National Coal Board in getting good value for money and ensuring that the miners did a decent day's work. Does he further agree that the industry is in a better position now than it was 12 months ago?

Mr. Walker: It is not true that the industry is in a better position. Considerable damage was done by the dispute to markets, coal faces, mining machinery and by delaying substantial investment programme. It is certainly true that a good investment programme, much higher than that of the rest of Europe together, is the best way to guarantee a good future for the industry.

Mr. Eadie: Why does the Secretary of State allow the chairman of the NCB to walk all over him? Regarding redundancy payments, is it not a fact that the NCB is instituting by stealth the closure of collieries without negotiation, and that miners are losing their jobs as a consequence? is the Secretary of State aware that the NACODS' dispute is costing the nation about £24 million a week? He should be worried about that, instead of answering, as he has been doing today, by saying that everything in the garden is lovely. We know that the garden is not lovely.

Mr. Walker: The main cost of the present dispute is the potential loss of markets for the industry to which the hon. Gentleman has devoted his life. The loss of coal production has been minute, as the hon. Gentleman knows, and there have been only small delays in starting production. The damage to the reputation of the industry has been considerable. With the guarantees given by the NCB, there is no need for the overtime ban to continue.

Nuclear Power Establishments

11. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the nuclear power establishments which Ministers in his Department have visited in the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: During the past three years departmental ministers have on various occasions visited all the principal Atomic Energy Authority and British Nuclear Fuels sites and a number of nuclear power stations. I shall give details in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. During the visits, has he been made aware of a concerted campaign which is being waged and seeks to imply that the presence of these establisments in a locality is itself a primary cause of cancer for those who live nearby? Is there any medical evidence to support that? If not, will my hon. Friend please take this opportunity to destroy those scaremongering techniques, which are causing a great deal of unnecessary anxiety to many people?

Mr. Goodlad: As my hon. Friend knows, this is primarily a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health. However, the radioactive discharges from Winfrith, about which my hon. Friend and others have written to me, are strictly controlled by the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Monitoring carried out by both MAFF and the operators confirms that the radiological impact of discharges is well within internationality recommended limits and is insignificant in relation to naturally occurring radioactivity. It is most unlikely that Winfrith discharges could have given rise to increased levels of leukaemia. Variations in the local incidence of leukaemia are found throughout the country. Studies are being carried out by the local health authorities to identify the incidence of leukaemia throughout east Dorset, and are still at a preliminary stage. There is certainly no evidence that connects any increase in leukaemia with Winfrith.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Is the Minister aware that the announcement in a written answer on a Friday of the new nuclear development at Dounreay is regarded as an affront to Scottish opinion? Since, in the words of Sir Christopher Hinton, the chairman of the Atomic Energy Authority at the time, that installation went there originally because there was an element of danger, is the Minister aware that the new development is regarded in the same light in Scotland?

Mr. Goodlad: My understanding is that the announcement has been widely welcomed in Scotland.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Is there not a need for the Government to mount a major campaign to put across to the largely uninformed public the basic point that that nuclear power is by far the safest form of energy conversion? Will he at least get across the simple point that one gets more radiation from having a colour television set in one's house than from living beside a nuclear power station?

Mr. Goodlad: I agree with my hon. Friend that reiteration of the facts can do a great deal to dispel misconceptions.

Mr. Wallace: If, in the near future, a Minister visits Dounreay, will he also take the opportunity to take the short trip across the water to my constituency in Orkney, where many people are worried that the new reprocessing plant may well cause difficulties and dangers to farming and marine interests? Will he reassure the House and my constituents that there will be a public inquiry so that these genuine anxieties can be fully expressed?

Mr. Goodlad: I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has today announced his intention of calling in the planning application for his own decision and that a public inquiry will be held. As the hon. Gentleman will know, no one in the House is more alive to the interests of his constituents than I am.

Mr. Rowlands: Is the Minister aware that there is genuine concern about aspects of nuclear discharges? For example, in Winfrith there is genuine local concern about unusually high levels of leukaemia, which are as yet unexplained? In order to allay these fears and worries, will he pull some of the information together and produce a comprehensive statement about the issues and problems arising from Winfrith so that those concerns and worries can be met?

Mr. Goodlad: When the result of the investigations to which I referred is available, I shall make sure that it is properly disseminated.

The following are the details.

Nuclear power establishments visited by Department of Energy Ministers during the past three years are:

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Harwell Atomic Energy Research Establishment
Dounreay Nuclear Power Development Establishment
Risley Nuclear Power Development Establishment
Springfields Nuclear Power Development Laboratories
Winfrith Atomic Energy Establishment
Culham Laboratory

British Nuclear Fuels plc
Sellafield Plant
Capenhurst Plant
Springfields Plant
Headquarters, Risley

Central Electricity Generating Board
Berkley Nuclear Laboratories
Heysham I and II Power Stations
Hinkley B Power Station

National Nuclear Corporation
Headquarters, Knutsford

Electricity Prices

12. **Mr.Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the report on two-tier pricing of electricity.

Mr. Goodlad: The Central Electricity Generating Board and the National Coal Board have put to my Department ideas for reducing further the price of electricity to the largest users. These ideas will be discussed with the industries.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is quite wrong for landlords to be able to surcharge tenants for electricity above the rate that they would pay themselves? Will he bring that practice to an end?

Mr. Goodland: I know that my hon. Friend has taken a great interest in this matter, which has been the subject of a number of inquiries by my right hon. Friend the Secretay of State for Trade and Industry. The Department of Trade and Industry is currently studying a report produced some months ago by the Office of Fair Trading, and I understand that no decisions have yet been taken. I shall ask my right hon. Friend to write to my hon. Friend in due course.

Coal Industry

13. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is satisfied with the steps taken by the National Coal Board to protect miners who worked during the recent dispute from intimidation and harassment.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am confident that the National Coal Board has made strenuous efforts to deal with the problem of intimidation in the coal industry. Firm action, including dismissal, has been, and will continue to be, taken against those indentified as offenders.

Mr. Taylor: In view of the complaints from the NUM about the need to avoid victimisation, may I ask whether my right hon. Friend has had any indication of support and co-operation from the NUM in order to avoid the intimidation and harassment that have been applied to a number of working miners?

Mr. Walker: Not exactly, but in the great majority of pits working conditions have very quickly returned to normal and no intimidation is taking place. However, instances have taken place in a minority of pits, and they have been dealt with firmly by the management.

Mr. Eastham: If there is a genuine desire to protect the rights of miners, may I also remind the right hon. Gentleman that many miners have been dismissed even though they have been tried in courts or have appeared before industrial tribunals which have found in their favour? Is it not about time that the Secretary of State made representations to Mr. MaGregor to reduce the number of such cases?

Mr. Walker: A considerable review has taken place and management decisions were taken. There are procedures to be followed if anyone considers that such decisions were incorrect. Those procedures are taking place.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my right hon. Friend have words with the chairman of the NCB to ensure that, in the context of continuing and increasing NCB productivity,

those who worked throughout the whole of the strike are given absolute preference to allow them to play a major role in the future success of the coal industry?

Mr. Walker: They did play, and are playing, a very major role. I am sure my hon. Friend will also agree that a large number of miners were kept out of work by various methods although they have the same desire for their industry to succeed. We need to support them as well.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Secretary of State aware that those who suffered the greatest intimidation and harassment are the 720 miners who did not get their jobs back after the strike ended? Is it not strange that in some NCB areas intimidation and harassment are occurring involving those who have not got their jobs back, whereas in other areas, where seemingly the strike was almost solid, almost every sacked miner has been given back his job? Perhaps someone at NCB level is involved in serious intimidation and harassment on an area basis. Why does not the right hon. Gentleman put that right?

Mr. Walker: I believe that that is inaccurate.

Mr. Orme: Does the Secretary of State agree that industrial relations are at an extremely low level following the dispute, and that the NCB has deliberately stirred this matter up and done nothing to ensure that normal relations are resumed? What is the Secretary of State doing about that?

Mr. Walker: The facts are that at the majority of pits normal relations have been resumed and production is at a high level, as are deliveries of coal. I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman is not being more positive in encouraging all working to return to normal.

Energy Audits

14. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to introduce a system of energy audits.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department's energy efficiency office continues to make grants of up to 50 per cent. towards the cost of energy surveys of non-domestic premises under the energy efficiency survey scheme. The energy efficiency office has supported the development of home energy audits, some of which are currently available to the public.

Mr. Hannam: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his successes in the industrial and commercial sector. Will he accept that we need a similar system to that operated in the United States, whereby anybody in the domestic sector can get a home energy audit done for only $15 through local electricity and gas companies? Would it not be desirable to introduce this system here? Pending the time when it is introduced, will my hon. Friend look at the position of local authorities and exert maximum pressure on them to ensure that their stock of housing is brought up to a reasonable standard?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is right to stress the need to learn lessons from others, and I have been able so see at first hand in Sweden and Denmark the progress made there in energy efficiency in the domestic sector. A number of lessons still need to be learnt, and my hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of encouraging home energy efficiency labelling and to show our acceptance of the fact that it is in the local authorities that considerable savings can be made.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

River Traffic (Noise)

20. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will make representations to the Port of London Authority about the level of noise from vessels passing close to the Palace of Westminster; and if he will make a statement.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): The authorities of the House keep in touch with the directorate of marine services of the Port of London Authority with regard to river traffic. If my hon. Friend has any particular point in mind, perhaps he would let me know.

Mr. Greenway: Is it not unnecessary for certain pleasure steamers to come so close to the Terrace, with the result that noisy bands and sometimes raucous singing drown the proceedings of Committees, sometimes for minutes on end? Cannot something be done about this?

Mr. Biffen: I must confess that this has been going on for some years and a bit of good-natured commentary from the river does not necessarily do any harm. However, I shall look into the point that my hon. Friend raises.

Mr. Skinner: Has the Port of London Authority sent the right hon. Gentleman any complaints based on the noise emanating from this place and disturbing the people travelling up the river?

Mr. Biffen: Again, in terms of entertainment, it is a good two-way traffic.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the Palace of Westminster were built in Trafalgar square or Hyde Park corner we might have something to worry about? However, as it is situated alongside Old Father Thames, with just a few vessels, tugs and motor boats going by, which is rather lovely, I agree for the first time with the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that there is much more noise from this Chamber than from the River Thames.

Mr. Biffen: Whatever supernatural force has joined those two together, let me put not asunder.

Parliamentary Procedure

21. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he has received any representations about improvements in parliamentary procedures.

Mr. Biffen: Yes, Sir. The latest report of the Procedure Committee — the Second Report from the Select Committee on Procedure, Session 1984-85 — includes major recommendations for changes in the Standing Committee procedures of the House.

Mr. Baker: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the private Member's motion to be moved on Friday to ensure the debate of a Bill that has the support of the House is within the rules of order, and it is proper that it should be debated. However, does he agree that there is a procedural loophole here, at which both he and the Select Committee on Procedure should look, to see whether action can be taken to stop it? [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend identifies that the procedures that are for debate in Friday are both in order and of general interest. I shall not now anticipate the remarks that I intend to make then.

Mr. Pavitt: Does the Leader of the House recall that, on a number of occasions, on a Friday, objections have been made and there have been requests from hon. Members on both sides of the House that the hon. Members concerned should be identified in *Hansard* and not remain anonymous? Has he looked at that, and will he try, with the Procedure Committee, to right that patent wrong?

Mr. Biffen: The Procedure Committee has reported on public Bills. But the hon. Gentleman is right to say that there are aspects of private Members' legislation which have given rise to anxiety in the past. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman's point will have been heard by the Chairman of the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Would it not be for the convenience of the House if my right hon. Friend made available in the Vote Office the report of the Procedure Committee which led to both the starting and the terminal hours on Fridays being brought forward one and a half hours, which was not done with the object of undoing it by sitting later?

Mr. Biffen: I shall look into that.

Mr. Peter Shore: In respect of this Friday's innovation, to put at its lowest, and major misuse of parliamentary procedure, to put it another way — *[Interruption]*—does the right hon. Gentleman not think that it would be wrong to allow this proposal to go ahead without first referring it to the Select Committee on Procedure, so that we might have a proper report on what would be a most dangerous precedent?

Mr. Biffen: The very remarks of the right hon. Gentleman and the way that they have been received in the House today suggests that it is a topic far better dealt with within the parameters of the debate rather than at Question Time.

Sir Peter Emery: I refer to my right hon. Friend's original answer about the last report of the Procedure Committee. As it has considerable importance for the House, may we have his assurance that we shall debate it before the House rises for the summer recess?

Mr. Biffen: I have said already that the Committee's proposals will be debated. I do not want to be specific about the precise time. But since I am always under pressure for the House to rise before getting too far into August, my hon. Friend will understand that any debates which might occur with advantage in the autumn are considered prime candidates for that treatment.

Members' Secretarial Allowance

22. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Lord Privy Seal what recent representations he has received advocating an increase in the Members' secretarial allowance.

Mr. Biffen: The Members' secretarial allowance has been the subject of parliamentary questions and, more recently, of an early-day motion.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Leader of the House aware that nearly 200 hon. Members of all parties have signed that early-day motion? Is that not a remarkable sign of the strength of feeling in the House, given that the signals from the Government are that they are not sympathetic to the idea? I appeal to the right hon. Gentleman, whose job it is to protect the interest of ordinary hon. Members and not those of the Cabinet, to show sympathy to a reasonable request to enable us to do a better job for our constituents.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman will know that the Government are committed to periodic reviews of these allowances. That remains the position. If we are to play the numbers game, I remind the hon. Gentleman that he could get only a little more than a score of his supporters to vote when he tried to persuade the House to move to a secretarial allowance of £17,000.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: If more hon. Members made good use of the superb facilities of the House of Commons Library, would there not be less need for research assistants and the money to pay them?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. I am anxious not to be drawn into the controversy about the adequacy of the secretarial allowance, other than to say that it is only 12 months since the figure was voted by the House of Commons and that the Government made it clear that it was subject to periodic review. I do not think that it would be wise to depart from the present arrangements so shortly after they have been concluded.

Mr. Beith: When considering this matter, was the Leader of the House influenced by the Prime Minister's remarks just before the recess, which implied that there had been a disproportionate increase in the costs of the House of Commons? If so, or if he believes what the Prime Minister said, does he believe that he has in some way neglected his duties to contain that expenditure or that he has properly stood up for the needs of the House to challenge the Government and what they are doing?

Mr. Biffen: Before getting into that type of debating exchange, the hon. Gentleman should remember that a great deal of the House's expenditures are not cash limited and that there have been substantial increases in the costs of running the House, which might well be merited but which still have to be justified.

Research Assistants

23. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Lord Privy Seal how many research assistants were employed by hon. Members as at 1 May; and how this compares with those employed on the same date in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Biffen: The number of Palace of Westminster photo-identity passes on issue to Members' research assistants on 1 May 1985 was 469. This figure compares with a total of 452 on 1 May 1984. I regret that the records which are held by the athorities of the House do not enable me to give comparative figures for the other years requested.

Mr. Bruinvels: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is ridiculous to have so many research assistants working in the House? Is he aware that 102 hon. Members have two or more research assistants, one hon. Member has eight research assistants, two have nine, nine have four, three have five and four have six? Should we not try to tie the number down so that hon. Members have no more than one research assistant and that research assistants on the books are paid?

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman was a half of one himself.

Mr. Biffen: In that case my hon. Friend speaks from experience. My hon. Friend makes an interesting point, but perhaps it would be better elaborated in the debate that has been promised on the second report of the Services Committee, dealing with research assistants.

CIVIL SERVICE

Unions (Meeting)

24. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Minister for the Civil Service on how many occasions he has met representatives of the Civil Service unions over the past 12 months.

25. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what recent meetings he has had with trade unions representing Civil Service staff.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): Other than informally, I have met the unions on six occasions in the last 12 months. The last occasion was at a meeting on 30 April held by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to discuss the question of arbitration with the general secretaries of four Civil Service unions in relation to their 1985 pay claims.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster most recently met representatives of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants on 2 April to hear their views in favour of extending unified grading in the Civil Service.

Mr. Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that the pressure of work in some local Departments, especially the Department of Health and Social Security and Customs and Excise, is probably greater now than ever before? In view of the rather low morale of the Civil Service, will my hon. Friend make it abundantly clear at his next meeting that the Government fully appreciate that Britain has an extremely loyal and efficient Civil Service, which is one of the best in the world, and the least corrupt?

Mr. Hayhoe: I willingly and wholeheartedly endorse my hon. Friends comments .

Mr. Winnick: Is it really intended that disciplinary action be taken against those at GCHQ who refuse to give up their union membership? Is the Minister aware that the Opposition would deplore any such action?

Mr. Hayhoe: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. He will know that questions on this matter should be directed in the first instance to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Dickens: A civil servant wrote to me this morning stating that, during the past 60 years, access to arbitration had been turned down by the Government 10 times, three times by the present Government. Civil servants feel very sore about the Government's denial of arbitration, but I do not know whether my information is right. Can my hon. Friend say whether it is?

Mr. Hayhoe: Post-war Governments of all persuasions have maintained that access to arbitration can be refused by the Government on grounds of national policy. I can confirm that the Government have refused access to arbitration.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: As it is the Government's view, as stated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his predecessor, that pay awards in the Civil Service should not fall consistently below awards in the private sector, what steps does the Minister propose to take in the forthcoming year to rectify what has happened in this year's pay award and other recent ones in which civil servants have fallen a long way behind the private sector?

Mr. Hayhoe: I confirm that both the present Chancellor of the Exchequer and his predecessor made such clear statements to representatives of the Civil Service unions. The hon. Gentleman will know that in the context of this year's pay negotiations the Government have made it clear once again that they are very anxious and willing to proceed to negotiations, with the aim of establishing an agreed pay system which will have long-term implications for the determination of future pay settlements.

Mr. Ashby: Does my hon. Friend not think that many of the Civil Service problems over pay and conditions would be resolved if the Ombudsman dealt with these matters?

Mr. Hayhoe: That is highly unlikely, but I am prepared to consider my hon. Friend's novel suggestion.

Mr. Janner: Has the Minister considered the answers given by each Department of State to my question about the ethnic origin and sex of its equal opportunities officer? In each case the reply was that the equal opportunities officer is white and male, except for the Secretary of State for Transport, who replied that his equal opportunities officer is a British citizen and that he does not understand the relevance of sex.

Mr. Hayhoe: The hon. and learned Gentleman's question goes very wide indeed of the question on the Order Paper. However, if he cares to pursue it with me in other ways I shall try to give him a definitive answer.

Dr. McDonald: Does the Minister think that the letter from the chairman of the Inland Revenue to his staff, threatening that those who engaged in industrial action were likely to have their career prospects blighted, is a sensible way to conduct industrial relations within the Civil Service?

Mr. Hayhoe: As ever—no, not as ever, but as so frequently happens—the hon. Lady has got it wrong. I have here the text of the letter that was sent by the head of the Inland Revenue to his staff. It begins:

"The first point I must make is that there is not, nor has there been, a ban on the promotion of those who have taken industrial action."

He then went on to make the points that I covered in the House when I answered questions on 18 February. I refer the hon. Lady to the answer that I gave then.

ENERGY

Coal Industry

15. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the financial resources available for use in the Scottish coalfield in the light of pit closures and the consequent employment problems.

Mr. David Hunt: NCB (Enterprise) Ltd., the National Coal Board's job creation subsidiary, is active throughout

the British coalfields. The funds available to the company are not allocated between areas but may be used in support of schemes wherever there is the opportunity to create real jobs. The House has been informed that the funding of the company will be kept under close review as operations progress.

Mr. Hamilton: Is the Minister aware that there is acute and growing concern in Scotland about the future of the coal mining industry? Is he further aware that in the area of the Seafield colliery in Fife male unemployment already stands at over 30 per cent. and that unemployment there would be considerably worsened if Seafield colliery were to close? Why does the Minister not do the same trick as was done by the Secretary of State for Scotland when he obtained £150 million from somewhere to get himself out of a hole over rates? If he can do it, why cannot the Secretary of State for Energy do it to create new jobs for miners who are to be thrown out of work because of pit closures?

Mr. Hunt: As I have already pointed out to the House, the funding of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. will be kept under review. However, the hon. Gentleman must realise, referring in particular to Seafield, that in Scotland we are seeing the result of damage caused by an unnecessary and tragic strike. Scotland suffered great damage during that dispute and, as a result, lost 11 coal-producing faces.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister not understand, first, that many people in Scotland believe that damage was caused by the manager of the National Coal Board in Scotland and, secondly, that if the Government, instead of creating NCB (Enterprise) Ltd., had, together with the NCB, put additional investment into new coal faces in Scotland, the unemployment problem would have been taken care of? What proposals does he have to authorise investment in the Musselburgh extension?

Mr. Hunt: First, may I put the record straight. There is no question but that Polkemmet was flooded as a direct consequence of the NUM strike, and I much regret the disgraceful suggestion made by the hon. Gentleman. As to investment, four major projects in Scotland are under way with an estimated capital cost of £91·8 million. In real terms, investment in the Scottish coalfield is 43 per cent. higher under the Conservative Government than it was under the Labour Government.

Coal Industry

16. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Energy, following representations to him for reinstatement of sacked miners arising from the miners' strike, how many have been reinstated as a consequence of inquiries to the National Coal Board.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand from the National Coal Board that of the 1,013 employees dismissed for offences related to the dispute, 373 have subsequently been re-employed.

Mr. Eadie: Will the Minister tell us about the cases that have been referred to him? He made great promises to the House that he would take up the cases of victimised miners. How many cases did he take up, and in how many cases was there reinstatement? In Scotland he has failed abysmally, because no miner has been reinstated following a request by the Minister.

Mr. Hunt: I have taken up every case that has been referred to me. I should tell the hon. Gentleman that all of us have been impressed by the responsibility of the vast majority of miners, who are now working together to repair the damage caused by the strike.

European Cup Final (Brussels)

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With Permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement about the events at the European Cup Final in Brussels last week and the measures which have been put in hand in this country to deal with football violence.

Last Wednesday, television viewers throughout Britain and the world witnessed the appalling scenes of violence at the European Cup Final in Brussels, which resulted in 38 deaths and a much larger number of injuries; 27 people are still in hospital. I know that the whole House will share the nation's profound sympathy for the bereaved and injured, and the sense of outrage and shame at the behaviour of some of our citizens which led to the tragedy. The House will also wish to associate itself with the message of sorrow and condolence sent by Her Majesty the Queen to President Pertini of Italy and King Baudouin of Belgium. I have sent similar messages on behalf of the Government to Signor Craxi, Mr. Martens and President Mitterrand. The immediate contribution that we have announced of £250,000 for the families of the victims is an expression of our deep sympathy and support for those involved.

The Belgian authorities and UEFA are conducting formal inquiries into the arrangements for the match and into the disaster. They will no doubt report on the extent to which the internationally agreed guidelines and precautions for spectator safety were followed. We cannot prejudge the outcome of those inquiries, but we must recognise that there has been a terrible record of violence at European football matches in which, I regret to say, English supporters have played a large part over many years.

In those circumstances, the Government welcomed the initial decision of the Football Association to withdraw English clubs from participation in European competitions next season, and we fully understand the subsequent decision of UEFA to ban English clubs from European competition for an indefinite period, and we believe it to be right. This withdrawal gives English football authorities the opportunity to introduce effective measures to combat violence and to convince other countries that they have done so.

Last week, I was able to have discussions with several people, including the chairman and secretary of the Football Association, who returned immediately from Mexico after receiving news of the tragedy, the chairman of Liverpool football club, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment, who happened to be present at the match and was an eye-witness to the events, and a number of football correspondents, who were also present at this and similar occasions in the past.

The following measures will be taken, or are already in hand, to put our own house in order.

First, we shall introduce as soon as possible legislation similar to that contained in the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980. That Act makes it an offence to be drunk or to possess alcohol on football coaches, on entry to grounds and in most areas of grounds. It also makes it an offence to be in possession of containers that could be used as missiles. Subject to discussions through the usual channels, it is our intention to have this legislation on the statute book by the summer recess, in time for the coming football season.

Second, we shall proceed next Session with the legislation envisaged in the Government's White Paper on the review of public order. The proposals on assemblies in the open air will considerably strengthen the powers available to the police to guard against the risk of disorder. Wherever they have reason to expect disorder at a football match, the police will, in effect, be able to limit the gate and impose other conditions. Under this provision, the police should be able to stipulate whatever steps they judge necessary to minimise the risk of disorder.

Third, Mr. Justice Popplewell will continue with his inquiry into the events at Bradford City and Birmingham football grounds on 11 May. His terms of reference are already wide enough to allow any lessons learnt from Brussels to be taken into account. I understand that Mr. Justice Poppelwell hopes to submit an interim report before the beginning of next season.

Fourth, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has set in hand the procedure for designating under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 all clubs in the third and fourth divisions. We have, in addition, agreed with the football authorities on a number of measures, including acceleration of the introduction of closed-circuit television, with the help of the Football Trust. I have been informed today that the trust is proposing to allocate £500,000 for this purpose as a first step. That would give cover in more than 30 grounds, in addition to the 11 at which experiments are already taking place.

Events at Brussels last week have, however, made it clear that more is now needed. I shall be discussing urgently with the football authorities proposals for the introduction of a practical scheme of membership schemes, either on a club or national basis, proposals for far more all-ticket matches and stricter controls or, in some cases, a ban on visiting spectators.

I recognise that such measures would mean a radical change in the way in which football is conducted in this country, but radical change is needed if football is to survive as a spectator sport and if English clubs are once more to be acceptable abroad.

Fifth, in parallel with our own action, we shall continue to co-operate in developing international measures to deal with hooliganism. Next week, my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport will be attending a meeting of European Ministers for that purpose.

In the meantime, we are anxious to give the Brussels authorities every possible assistance in bringing to justice and dealing appropriately with people from this country who have committed offences in connection with last Wednesday's match. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has sent a message to the Belgian Minister of the Interior offering the assistance and co-operation of British police forces. The Merseyside police and the Metropolitan police are examining television film closely to see whether they can identify those responsible for last Wednesday's violence.

We also want to do everything within our power to remove any possible difficulty in the way of any charges that the Belgian authorities may decide to bring. Arrangements already exist between the United Kingdom and Belgium for the extradition of those accused of serious offences of violence such as murder, manslaughter,

[The Prime Minister]

wounding or serious assault. If the Belgian authorities were to seek the extradition of someone accused of such an offence, we should naturally give them every assistance to meet our requirements on evidence.

One disincentive for the Belgian authorities may be that it is less trouble simply to expel Britons who may have committed offences rather than to prosecute and sentence them appropriately. We intend to offer the Belgians the opportunity, in accordance with the Repatriation of Prisoners Act, of removal to prison in this country of anyone who may be given a prison sentence in Belgium.

I hope that last Wednesday's sickening events will unite all decent people in helping to eradicate hooliganism. To curb violence requires effort and commitment from us all. If English clubs are to play football in Europe again, they can do so only when their good name, and that of their followers and supporters, has been restored.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): First, I should like to repeat my complete condemnation of the violence that led to the deaths and injuries at Heysel stadium last Wednesday. Naturally, we in the official Opposition join all others in offering our deepest condolences to the relatives of all those who died and of those who were injured. As I have already said, we agree with the Government's decision to give £250,000 to the relief fund set up by the Italian Government. I welcome the assistance being given, and announced in the Prime Minister's statement, in bringing to justice the criminals of any nationality and of any affiliation who were responsible for the tragedy in Brussels.

As to today's statement by the Prime Minister, I should like to tell the right hon. Lady that the Opposition support the Government's decision to bring in legislation similar to the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980. However, we are frankly surprised at the rather restricted action proposed by the Government, and disappointed at the decision to extend Mr. Justice Popplewell's inquiry beyond its already stretched limits. Does the Prime Minister really consider that the learned judge, with all his vigour and undoubted thoroughness, has the resources and facilities necessary for yet another major area of inquiry? Surely it is not enough to hope, as the right hon. Lady said in her statement, that Mr. Justice Popplewell will produce an interim report in time for proposals to be implemented before the beginning of the next football season. We need a firm assurance now that the report will come in time for proposals to be implemented before the season begins, and that any necessary resources will be available for practical implementation.

I refer to the problems of football and football hooliganism. May I specifically ask the right hon. Lady whether she will bring forward proposals to ensure that some of the revenue taken out of the game is returned in the form of improved safety and security at football grounds? That is clearly necessary to assist with the cost of better accommodation and effective policing. Frankly, the proposals that we have heard so far do not begin to match the scale of the crisis in British football, both in and near to British football grounds. When we consider that it is now 12 weeks since the awful scenes at the Luton ground in the Cup match against Millwall, and that it is exactly the same period—12 weeks—until 24 August, the beginning of the new football season, that shows how much speed and effectiveness is necessary to tackle the problem directly before we are afflicted again next season by the scenes that we have witnessed in this and previous seasons.

In the official Opposition and, I think, in the House generally, we are and must be intent on securing arrangements by both the Government and other relevant authorities, which will help football clubs and genuine football supporters, who are in the vast majority, and the police, to defeat the criminals who are destroying the game, terrorising spectators and inflicting misery on people who live near football grounds or who travel when football games are taking place. In the Opposition, as a basic principle, we seek properly to maintain the civil liberties of the decent and innocent majority to go to games in safety, and to live in peace. To that end, I say to the Prime Minister that our responses to this matter cannot relate simply or solely to punishment or to policing; neither can they relate only to a period of probation for English football.

On 14 March, I asked:

"Will the right hon. Lady agree that we need action to identify and deal with the causes of these afflictions and the breakdown of behaviour in society?"—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1985; Vol. 75, c. 431.]

We want the thugs caught and punished, but does the Prime Minister agree that in addition it is essential to discover not only those who commit the crimes but why they commit such crimes? Therefore, can we look forward to a quick and thorough investigation with that in view, which would involve the police, youth and social workers and others with direct practical experience from week to week of dealing with the issues posed by the spread of thuggery? *[Interruption.]* If it is the case, as Mr. John Smith and hon. Members have suggested and as others have noted in years gone by, that any of this thuggery is related in any way to political organisation by racists, Fascists or anyone else, that must be among the areas to be inquired into so that the menace to democracy is taken out.

We have witnessed a terrible tragedy in Brussels, and we now know UEFA's response. The thuggish minority, who are a stain on British football and British society, are the cause of both. It must be our determined purpose now to ensure that they have had their day once and for all. On football grounds and anywhere else in society we shall never permit them to show their ugly and thuggish face again.

The Prime Minister: If I may reply to some of the right hon. Gentleman's points. I am grateful to him for saying that the Opposition will support legislation similar to the Scottish legislation. As I said, we shall be in touch through the usual channels on this matter.

I did not say that Mr. Justice Popplewell will inquire into the matters at Brussels. I said, and drafted this point very carefully:

"His terms of reference are already wide enough to allow any lessons learnt from Brussels to be taken into account."

I cannot speed up the rate at which Mr. Justice Popplewell will report. I understand that he intends to make an interim report before the beginning of next season. In the meantime, the Football Association and the Football Trust are active. Each of the football clubs is responsible for the safety of people on its ground. Fire officers are now looking at the stands. The Football Ground Improvement Trust and some surveyors are

looking at the stands to ascertain the changes that can be made. Those changes cannot all be made in time for next season. But the numbers of people that the clubs allow into the grounds must take into account the condition of the stands already on the grounds because the clubs are responsible for safety.

On finance, there is already a working party under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane), consisting of the Football Association, the Football League, the Football Trust, the Football Grounds Improvement Trust, the Pools Promoters Association and the Sports Council to make an assessment of the moneys that are needed to make the grounds safe. This assessment will be made in view of the numbers of spectators many of those grounds now have, and not in relation to the stands that they had for higher numbers of spectators in the past. Of the money that is available at the moment, £7 million a year goes from the football promoters to the Football Trust and £3·3 million was distributed retrospectively in 1984 from the Football Ground Improvement Trust—not for new applications for safety provision but because there were no applications for safety provision. The £3·3 million was distributed retrospectively for work that had already been done. A further £5 million a year is received direct from pools promoters as payment for the copyright on the fixtures list, without which the pools could not operate and £3·5 million a year is received from television. That is apart from the proceeds from the gate. Considerable sums are already going into football. We are prepared to allocate more, should the committee's findings show that that is necessary.

The right hon. Gentleman suggested that there should be an inquiry into crime and hooliganism. That could go on for years and find as many answers as there are people on such an inquiry. There is violence in human nature. There are only three ways of trying to deal with it—persuasion, prevention or punishment. We shall try to operate all three.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is the right hon. Lady aware that the two grounds of Liverpool and Everton are in my constituency? Over the weekend I went round my constituency and spoke to people who were on the Z,Y and X terraces at Brussels? Is the right hon. Lady aware that there is a deep feeling of grief among the people of Liverpool? They are crying for the dead and for their families; they are crying for the city, because they never expected, with their record, that such an event could occur; they are crying for football both in Britain and internationally; they are crying because the truth has been a casualty; and they are crying because they believe that the time has come to face up to the political elements that were involved in that and other matches—incidentally, from both ends. Mr. Brian Moore, the ITN correspondent, was the only person who clearly explained that the forces involved were trying desperately to create trouble and cause problems for our people.

I have today told the Italian ambassador, on this Italian day, that my people in Liverpool have as much grief in their hearts as the people of Milan, Turin or elsewhere in Italy.

I ask the right hon. Lady not to become involved in a cover-up of the terrible events. Other questions must be asked. What about the fact that many people have run away from their responsibilities? What about the position of the Belgian authorities, the fact that the ground was unsuitable and that police action was insufficient to deal with the outbreak of violence? What about the fact that UEFA has been quick to introduce action but has not dealt with the situation?

I say to the right hon. Lady that whatever is being suggested must not be used as a further attempt to undermine our civil liberties. We must deal with the individuals and groups concerned; we must root out and isolate them. We have to say who they were and explain why they did it. We must find the reason—that is the important factor. I hope that the right hon. Lady will not be misled in other directions.

The Prime Minister: I think that the whole nation shares the grief expressed by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). Indeed, we are united in sharing and expressing that grief.

We cannot prejudge the results of the inquiry in Belgium. Some of the matters to which the hon. Gentleman referred would not be necessary unless there were soccer hooliganism. It is appalling that supporters of one club cannot stand alongside supporters of another club without the fear of violence. That used not to be so in football, or in any sport in this country. It is that that we must try to eradicate. In the meantime, we must tackle the situation by a mixture of prevention, above all, and of punishment when these events occur.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): As someone with the closest possible connection with the town of Turin, may I speak of my great shame at the events of last Wednesday? There should be no cover-up and no excuses for the disgrace of those events.

We talk about giving help to the police in Belgium, but why on Thursday morning were there not hundreds of police officers at all points of entry into this country finding out the names and addresses of those returning from Belgium and what they had been doing, so that we could discover exactly who was responsible for that outrage?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the responsibility should be placed firmly on the football associations and on the clubs themselves, and that clubs and stadiums should be licensed in the same way as public houses, so that, if clubs failed to meet the requirements of good order, they could be closed until they could met them? Then we would not export our violence to the continent of Europe.

The Prime Minister: With regard to police help, the police are giving all the assistance that they possibly can. In addition to looking at videos, they have been active at some of the ports of entry of football supporters on their return, as my hon. Friend would expect.

The question of drink at football clubs will be dealt with under the legislation that will shortly be brought before the House. There are one or two ways in which English clubs differ from Scottish clubs, and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is in consultation with the police about any differences in legislation that may be advisable.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand that the House feels very deeply about this matter, but I must have regard to the subsequent business. Therefore, I ask for brief questions, and I shall allow them to run until 4.15 pm.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I associate myself and my hon. Friends with the expressions of sympathy and with the condolences which have been offered to the bereaved and to those who were injured in the terrible events of last Wednesday.

May I also tell the Prime Minister and the House that the people of Liverpool feel not only acute grief but a profound sense of shame at the mindless acts of a minority who dragged the name of a great football club and city into the dust by their actions? Those actions cannot be forgiven by people trying to sweep aside the blame and pass it on either to the Belgian authorities or to UEFA.

Will the Prime Minister consider extending the ban on alcohol to areas around football grounds? When matches are played away from home, alcohol should be banned not only on the coaches taking people to matches but on the duty-free ferries.

I ask the Prime Minister to urge those who witnessed the scenes in which there was a breakdown of personal responsibility last Wednesday, and those who have some say in running the affairs of the city of Liverpool at this critical time, not to break the law or to elevate mob rule to some sort of cult, but to endeavour to achieve the highest levels of personal responsibility which are necessary if we are never again to witness the kind of scenes that we saw last Wednesday.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful for what the hon. Member said. There are, I believe, no excuses for what happened, and we must not try to find any.

With regard to the hon. Member's comments about alcohol being available in areas around football grounds, the police can already apply to the magistrates, so that public houses and places where alcohol is sold can be closed on a particular day for a particular time. Use can be made of that power.

I echo the hon. Member's suggestion that we should all attempt to ensure that there are the highest levels of effort and commitment to stamping out violence, because we all have some part in setting the standards by which our society lives.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I have been particularly interested in the subject since the Luton and Millwall game. Does my right hon. Friend accept that there will be some disappointment at her statement?

The remedies that she has put forward in regard to legilsation concerning alcohol, club membership tickets and all-ticket games will not necessarily eradicate the problem. I listened in vain for some hint of the severe penalties that might be imposed upon hooligans. Nowhere in my right hon. Friend's statement was there any suggestion about penalties that would impose on hooligans the sort of physical pain that they so readily impose on other people.

In addition to the legislation that my right hon. Friend intends to bring before the House, which will receive all-party support, could not some amendment be made to the Criminal Justice Act 1982 to enable hooligans to be punished so severely that they will not commit such crimes again?

The Prime Minister: The penalties available for these serious crimes are already severe. The penalties meted out at Cambridge about a fortnight ago were of the order of five years' imprisonment, and we all thought that they were appropriate sentences. There could, indeed, be even more severe sentences. The Court of Appeal has already said that severe crimes of that nature should in general meet with a prison sentence. Recent events will probably mean that heavier sentences are meted out, and I think that that would be right.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Is the Prime Minister aware that, of course, it is right to act against violence? Does she recall that it was Frank McElhone, a junior Minister at the Scottish Office, who did the research upon which the Scottish legislation was based? I speak as someone who lives alongside Elland road football ground. We know that violence occurs outside the ground—in city centres and on the trains—and that people are afraid. Violence does not just occur in the grounds. Has the Prime Minister considered—it is what I asked myself when I was Home Secretary—what has gone wrong? On 3 September, 40 years ago, the Welsh Guards went into Brussels as its liberating force and anyone with a daffodil in his hat was well received. Then we saw what happened last week. Something has gone wrong in this country and the right hon. Lady as Prime Minister must give some thought as to what it is.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is aware that there has been what one of the newspapers called at the weekend

"a chronicle of violence in soccer"

for over 15 years. There has been violence elsewhere also. Violence is frequently caused by people who have quite a bit of money. Violence is caused partly because there is now more money and far more mobility than there was in the past, and that enables people to move from one soccer club to another much more quickly. In the meantime, we must act on prevention and punishment. Punishment is part of prevention. I do not believe that it would help to have an extended, indefinite inquiry into the causes of crime which has been with us as long as man has existed.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): Is my right hon. Friend aware that amid all the shame and humiliation to which our country has been subjected abroad, the only reaction so far that has cut any ice overseas is her clear condemnation of the atrocity, her outright apology and the announcement that she has made today that we intend to put our own house in order? Will she nevertheless accept that no words and no legislation will be effective unless the police can enforce that legislation? The police are fed up with being used as the "poor bloody infantry" in such disputes. They are fed up with asking for powers and being denied them. In particular, they need to be able to search for weapons, liquor or drugs under the clothing of those who enter football grounds. That power was denied them in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. They need the power to ban a football match if those going to it pose a clear threat to public order.

The Prime Minister: I have made it clear many times that there are no excuses for what occurred. There is only shame that it should have occurred. With regard to legislation, under the proposed public order legislation, we shall try to see that the police have increased powers to decide what goes on in football grounds if they apprehend that there might be public disorder. I have said that that legislation will come forward during the next Session. I understand that the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 does not prevent the police from searching for weapons in any case where that is considered necessary.

I hope that my hon. Friend will take the view that we are increasing the available powers. In the proposed legislation we shall be implementing measures similar to those contained in the Scottish legislation and we shall be prohibiting the supply of alcohol on trains.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Prime Minister aware that the despair and disaffection of so many young people in Great Britain today is the breeding ground for the mindless and appalling aggression that we saw in Brussels last week? However, that is no excuse for it. I agree with her that we must not try to find excuses.

However, she must face the fact that aggressive economic and social policies exacerbate the problem and that, unless those policies are softened or modified, what happened in Brussels last week may well be a tragic and chilling prelude to what may happen in Britain in the future.

The Prime Minister: I accept a good deal of what the right hon. Gentleman says. I think that this nation has done something creditable, which shows its underlying and overwhelming sense of decency, by accepting that there are no excuses and by feeling a national shame. That shows that civilisation and civilised values in this country still run strong. I believe that we have the overwhelming majority of people behind us when we take rather sterner action than we might have previously thought necessary. I believe that people expect that action to be taken now.

Mr. Stefan Terlezki (Cardiff, West): People in Wales are shocked and horrified by what happened in Brussels. Wales has only four professional clubs. We understand the horror of what occurred in Brussels, and we hope that such a thing will not happen in Wales or the rest of the United Kingdom.

I agree with the proposals that my right hon. Friend has announced this afternoon, but I was somewhat perturbed when she mentioned membership cards. I should like to see a membership card with a photograph issued to young supporters aged between 12 and 20. I am convinced that that would go a long way to help. When I was associated with Cardiff City football club, such passes were issued to young supporters. I remember one evening when Cardiff City played Hereford United. There were 35,000 people watching, but there was not one arrest or prosecution. I should like to see such passes introduced by every football club before the kick-off in the autumn.

The Prime Minister: A number of views are held about membership cards. Unfortunately, they are different. Some believe as fiercely as my hon. Friend that there must be club membership cards containing a photograph. Others say that there should be national membership cards. I am assured that with modern technology either is technically feasible. I shall be discussing that point again with the Football Association which, before the events in Brussels, was resistant to the idea of membership cards. I shall be doing my utmost to persuade it that club membership cards are necessary to achieve the requisite control.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): As the Member representing Hampden park who has seen the Scottish experiment in operation, may I ask the Prime Minister to consider the closure of all licensed premises within a radius around a football ground as well as banning the taking of alcohol into football grounds in the legislation that she intends to introduce? Secondly, and more positively, may I suggest that when she studies the Scottish experiment she reads the report produced by the late Frank McElhone and considers the positive ideas that he proposed—in particular, all-seat stadiums and that there should be more community facilities within them to make football grounds part of the community, not just part of the football scene?

The Prime Minister: With regard to the hon. Gentleman's first point, it is already possible for the police to apply to the magistrates for the closure of licensed premises near to grounds. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that that is necessary. We have already discussed with the Football Association seating in stadiums, the provision of family enclosures, to which the Football Trust frequently makes special subsidies to the various clubs, and more all-ticket matches. All these things are under discussion already with the Football Association. I take note of what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the majority of people on Merseyside do not and will not attempt to justify or excuse the actions of the drunken and homicidal hooligans in Brussels the other night? Does she accept also that Merseysiders, who were so disgraced in Brussels, will support whatever measures are necessary — the measures which are announced or measures which are suggested in future— to ensure that what took place in Brussels never happens again?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I believe that there is a national sense of shame and that the people of Liverpool feel especially deeply about what took place in Brussels. We shall be introducing appropriate legislation to deal with the drink problem. However, I think that it would be a mistake to believe that that will solve all the problems. The term "mindless violence" is used frequently, but my worry is that it is often calculated and mindful violence, which is an important factor. We must try to apprehend and punish severely those who commit acts of violence wherever violence occurs.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): The Prime Minister will be aware that there has been universal condemnation in Liverpool of the actions of those who were responsible for the violence last Wednesday. Liverpool does not abrogate responsibility for the part played by so-called Liverpool supporters. I hope that the right hon. Lady will make every effort to ensure that we seek out those who were responsible and that our actions do not amount to a universal condemnation of the city. As I have said, Liverpool has profound sympathy with the families which have been bereaved. Indeed, that sympathy was reflected in a service that took place in Liverpool on Saturday.

Will the Prime Minister recognise that the violence which we saw on Wednesday has been developing over the past decade and is not an overnight phenomenon? That is my view as a Liverpool supporter of many years' standing who has stood on the terraces. Little attention has been give to those who now occupy the terraces, which used to be occupied by those who wanted to watch a sporting game. The present occupants are those who go to matches for purposes that are limited to violence, thuggery and

[Mr. Eddie Loyden]

hooliganism. Will the right hon. Lady ensure that proper access is given to all those who witnessed certain events at the Brussels match so that the fullest and most comprehensive inquiry can take place? Only that approach will lead to the elimination of violence at football grounds.

The Prime Minister: I agree very much with the hon. Gentleman's contribution. Given the scenes that we saw on television and the terrible consequences, it is something of a disappointment that so few have so far been apprehended or arrested. The anonymity of the crowd is one of the deeply disturbing factors in such crimes, and that is why we are trying to do so much with closed circuit television. We are going through the photographs to ascertain whether we can identify those who were responsible for what took place. That is why we are so anxious to see the introduction of identity cards and other means by which we can readily identify those who attend football matches. Everything possible will be done to apprehend those who were responsible and to bring them to justice. That would be the best thing possible, and for that we need the co-operation of those who were present who know those who were responsible.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I accept that there is no excuse for the violence that took place in Brussels. Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that every co-operation will be given by her Ministers and by our police to the Belgian police, especially in the light of evidence that has come before me today and which I intend to place before Ministers? The evidence suggests that there was inadequate policing at the stadium before and after the match and that Belgian police officers were seen selling tickets at random outside the stadium before the match.

The Prime Minister: I think that these matters will emerge as the inquiry into the events which took place in the stadium, which the Belgian authorities are conducting, continues. My hon. Friend is aware that the inquiry is taking place. We must have the right arrangements to prevent these violent events from taking place and these must include seating and limitations of crowds and of who shall be present. The matters to which my hon. Friend has referred would not have been harmful if there had not been a tremendous streak of hooliganism within the stadium.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Does the Prime Minister accept that the anti-hooligan measures that she proposes make sense but involve major financial problems for the less wealthy football clubs in the lower divisions? Does she accept that pool betting duty is now raising £220 million a year for the Government and that a 2·5 per cent. reduction of the duty would generate £15 million? If that sum were distributed throughout the Football Trust there would be enough money to bring all league clubs up to acceptable safety standards and to pay for the anti-hooligan measures in the lower divisions which she proposes. Will she consider that as an urgent measure?

The Prime Minister: The football pool betting levy is a tax on gambling, not on football. The Government must have income to carry out the many social and other services for which they are responsible. We are prepared to find more money if the committee which is now sitting says that that is necessary. As I have said, £7 million goes to the Football Trust each year and £5·5 million goes to football league clubs for the copyright of the matches which are played. Television rights amount to £3·5 million. Last year, in the absence of further applications for improvements to grounds, the Football Ground Improvement Trust disbursed £3·3 million in support of improvements which had already taken place. We must direct ourselves to the money which is available and is being used for safety purposes and to the new rules which the Football Association, after discussion, may think fit to introduce. There is no point in re-doing up old stands which are far too large for the numbers of spectators who now attend matches.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxstowe): I am sure that we all accept that football should not be a vehicle for violence, that there are no excuses for violence and that violence has become a disgrace for teams, towns and the country. Will my right hon. Friend accept that there are millions of football supporters who watch matches every week and that many of them organise supporters' clubs? Is she aware that the supporters' clubs have a great deal to offer in terms of prevention and identifying the hooligans? Will she ensure that the supporters' clubs have a full part in all the discussions that take place?

The Prime Minister: I take note of my hon. Friend's remarks. I am sure that we shall have the overwhelming support of all members of supporters' clubs who love football and who wish to see an end to hooliganism and violence. I am sure that these supporters want once more to be able to take their families to football matches to see the game played as it used to be played.

Mr. Kinnock: The Opposition want to co-operate as much as possible with the improvement of legislation and with other measures which are intendedd to combat hooliganism at football grounds and elsewhere. However, I listened intently to the right hon. Lady and I heard no effective proposals for co-ordination between the various interested bodies. She has given no undertakings of adequate finance being made available, despite the fortunes that are made out of football. She has given no undertaking to investigate the causes of violent criminality. Instead, we have heard the Prime Minister confine herself almost entirely to addressing the symptoms of the sickness, and only as they relate to football, which is only a part of the problem afflicting our society.

I ask the Prime Minister further to reflect on these matters and to reconsider her attitude so that we can get directly to the sources of the savagery and by that means find real answers. I plead with the right hon. Lady to do that before she commits herself irrevocably only to dealing with a small part, albeit a horrific one, of the problem.

The Prime Minister: I said in reply to the right hon. Gentleman's earlier contribution that there is already a co-ordinating committee on finance under the chairmanship of the Minister with responsibility for sport, my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane). On his working party there are representatives of the Football Association, the Football League, the Football Trust, the Football Grounds Improvement Trust, the Pools Promoters Association and the Sports Council. The committee is considering the very finance to which the right hon. Gentleman refers.

Regarding the right hon. Gentleman's desire for a general inquiry into the causes of violence, there are books

and books, papers and papers, and courses and courses upon it. They have not found the answer and they never will. I do not intend to ask for yet another inquiry.

Social Security Review

4.20 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler: I will with permission, Mr. Speaker, make a statement on the review of social security.

During the last 18 months the Government have been examining the major areas of social security provision. In that time more than 40,000 consultation documents were issued, 4,500 pieces of evidence were received, and 62 organisations and individuals gave oral evidence at public sessions. The Government are today publishing a Green Paper which sets out their proposals. We will now be seeking comments on the proposals from interested organisations and will be providing an opportunity for the House to debate them.

The social security system in the United Kingdom owes a great deal to the report of Sir William Beveridge in 1942. Although much of what he proposed was changed when it came to implementation, and more has been changed since, many of the principles on which his proposals were founded remain sound. The Government remain committed to the concept of a national insurance system, under which entitlement to the major benefits is earned by the payment of contributions during a working life. The Government also believe that our tradition of state support for those in need is one which should be maintained and developed. However, social security is not a function of the state alone. It should be a partnership between the individual and the state—a system built on twin pillars.

Any review of social security must recognise its considerable achievements, but the review has shown that there are several major causes for concern. By common consent the social security system is too complex. That is to the disadvantage of both the public and the staff. In particular, the research evidence shows that substantial numbers of supplementary benefit claimants do not understand how their entitlement is worked out, in spite of the fact that 38,000 staff are now working exclusively on supplementary benefit. With the pressures now being faced there is a danger that some parts of the system will break down. It is, therefore, a matter of urgency that we devise a simpler and more coherent system.

The social security system also needs to be modernised. It is not properly co-ordinated with the tax system and operates with outdated equipment. We now need a major computerisation strategy for social security, which can link effectively with other Government systems, including that of the Inland Revenue.

In terms of spending, the cost of the social security system has increased fivefold in real terms since the war and now totals some £40 billion a year. That is over 30 per cent. of all public spending and represents over 11 per cent. of gross domestic product compared with only 4·7 per cent. after the war. Nor has the pressure for growth in spending ended. In the first part of the next century we need to provide for an extra 4 million pensioners. That, taken together with the state earnings-related pension scheme, means that spending on pensions will at least treble. We must ensure now that we have a soundly based social security system which the country can afford.

Above all, perhaps, the social security system does not always help those most in need. More than half of those living on the lowest incomes are in families with children. This affects not only the unemployed, but families where

[Mr. Norman Fowler]

the head is working. Yet, under the present system, low income working families can face both the difficulty of escaping the poverty trap, where they may get no increase in total income when their earnings rise, and the unacceptable position that they can be better off out of work. That position must be changed.

To make better provision to meet the needs of poor working families with children has been a major priority of the review. We therefore propose to introduce a new benefit, to be called family credit, to provide better help for such families. Family income supplement will be abolished. Family credit will have three main features. First, it will be paid on the same basis as help to unemployed families, in that help will be related to the age of children. That means that families with children cannot generally be better off out of work than in work.

Secondly, family credit will be related to take-home pay, not to gross earnings, as is family income supplement. The worst effects of the poverty trap will be eliminated by making it impossible for people to face a marginal tax rate of more than 100 per cent. Thirdly, it will be paid by employers through the pay packet. Families will see their benefit as part of their income from work, whether as an offset to tax and national insurance, or, in the case of the lowest paid, as an addition to gross pay.

Family credit will be paid in addition to child benefit. The Government believe that the extra responsibilities carried by all those bringing up children should be recognised. Child benefit will, therefore, continue to be paid for all children, irrespective of the means of the family.

Family credit will be part of a coherent system of income-related benefits. That system, covering basic income support, assistance with housing costs and help for low income families, will be based on a common income test and a common structure. It will be simpler, fairer and easier to administer, and it will provide the same level of help at the same level of income for those in and out of work.

We propose to replace supplementary benefit with a new income support system. The central concept of the income support scheme is that the regular extra payments, now made on the basis of detailed individual assessment, should be absorbed into the main rates of benefit. Those rates will provide a special higher level of benefit for pensioners, the long-term sick and disabled and lone parents. Families with children will not only receive assistance for each child, but a premium to reflect the extra pressures that they must cope with. At the same time, the capital rule will be eased by introducing a taper between £3,000 and £6,000, instead of the present inflexible £3,000 cut-off. We shall also ease the earnings rule for the long-term unemployed and the disabled.

The income support scheme should provide for the needs of almost all claimants, but we recognise that the system must be ready to cope flexibly and quickly with particular problems. Instead of the present single payments system, we propose to set up a social fund which will be operated on a discretionary basis by specially trained staff at Department of Health and Social Security local offices. It will provide emergency help where needed, and help those who face particular difficulties. We also expect that the social fund will, in time, provide a better basis for contributing cash help to enable people to be cared for in the community rather than in institutions.

Today I am also publishing the report of the housing benefit review team, and have accepted most of its recommendations. The review team found that housing benefit was excessively complicated, involving six different tapers applied to different groups at different income levels. It is also expensive and poorly targeted, with more than one third of all households, some with incomes up to average earnings, receiving benefit.

We intend to move to a simpler and clearer system. It will be based on the same net income assessment basis as the income support and family credit systems. It will also provide help on the basis of rent and rates together rather than separately, as at present.

For the poorest families, housing benefit will meet 100 per cent. of rent. At present 100 per cent. help goes only to those on supplementary benefit. In future, it will apply equally to those in and out of work.

We believe, however, that the basis on which help is provided with rates needs to be changed. At present some 7 million householders receive help with some or all of their rate bills and over 3 million householders pay no rates. As a result, a large proportion of people live in households in which no rates are paid. This means that there is no effective link between payment for and use of local services. The whole structure of rates is currently under review, but the Government believe that, so long as domestic rates remain, all householders should be directly responsible for making some payment towards them. The Government have in mind a figure of the order of 20 per cent.

The review also examined the contributory national insurance benefits for unemployment, maternity and widowhood. As I have already made clear, the Government remain committed to the principle of basic provision for these contingencies organised by the state through the national insurance system. We propose no change in unemployment benefit, which will continue to be paid for 12 months.

For widows under 60, we propose to replace the widow's allowance currently payable for the first six months after bereavement by a single lump sum payment of £1,000 to give them more help when it is most needed. In addition, widowed mother's allowance will now be paid from the time of bereavement rather than after six months as at present. Widow's pension will also be paid from the time of bereavement, but the rules of eligibility will be modified to concentrate help more on older widows who are least likely to be able to resume work. The changes will not affect the benefit paid to any existing widows.

In maternity, we propose to adjust the rules governing materinity allowance so that the mother can have greater freedom in choosing when, around the time of her confinement, she wishes to be paid the allowance. We also intend to change the qualification period so that the benefit is more likely to be paid to women who have had to give up work in order to have their babies.

The maternity grant and the death grant have been left at their present level—£25 and £30 respectively—for many years and are now quite inadequate for their purpose. The average cost of a funeral is now over 10 times as much as the death grant, and it costs £20 in administration to pay out each £30 grant. We propose instead a new maternity grant of £75—three times the level of the present grant

—available to all low income families. Help with the full cost of funerals will also be made available more widely than at present to anybody who has responsibility for a funeral and lacks the resources to pay for it. Help will be provided through the social fund to ensure that it can be given quickly and flexibly and with the minimum of detailed inquiry. These changes will concentrate help where and when it is most needed instead of providing a token contribution to everybody when it may be of little practical use.

The largest single area of social security spending is on pensions. The basis pension alone accounts for over £15 billion a year and is paid to 9 million people. That pension accounts, on average, for half the income of pensioners and has been a major factor in raising pensioners' living standards since the war. It is, and must remain, the basis on which individuals can build additional pension provision. The question is how that extra provision should be made.

At present only about half the working population belong to occupational pension schemes. The development of occupational pension schemes has been an important factor in improving living standards since the war, but the coverage of schemes has not increased since the mid-1960s. The development which it was hoped would follow the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 has not taken place. Nor has the forecast of cost on which the 1975 scheme was based proved sound. The analysis undertaken during the review has shown that the number of pensioners for whom we will eventually need to provide is 3 million greater than was recognised in 1974 and 4 million higher than it is today. It is clear, therefore, that the long-term costs of state pensions are set to rise steeply in the first 30 years of the next century. If the basic pension was uprated in line with prices, its cost would increase in real terms by half to £22 billion. If it kept pace with earnings, the cost would treble to nearly £45 billion. On top of that, the cost of the state earnings-related scheme will add another £23 billion. Thus, the total pensions bill will at least treble and could increase by over four times. At the same time the ratio of contributors to pensioners will worsen, and it is estimated that there will be only 1·6 contributors for each pensioner compared with 2·3 now.

As a country we cannot ignore these emerging costs. If the best estimates available to us lead us to question whether we will be able to afford the promises we are making, we have a duty to re-examine the position. It would be an abdication of responsibility to hand down obligations to our children which we believe they cannot fulfil.

The real question is not whether action should be taken on the state earnings-related scheme, but what action. There are those who argue that we should restrict the emerging cost of the state scheme by changing its provisions. The difficulty of that course is that contributions would remain the same while benefits would be reduced. There is no reason to believe that there would be any increase in occupational pensions to fill that gap. The Government have concluded that it would be better to adopt a different approach. This would be based on the aim of ensuring that in addition to the basic pension everyone has his own pension with his job—whether it be an occupational pension, membership of an industry-wide scheme or a personal pension. In all cases every employee would have the right to a contribution from his employer.

We recognise, however, that relatively older workers would have difficulty in building up adequate occupational pension cover. We have decided, therefore, not to make any changes for those within 15 years of retirement. For men aged 50 or over and women aged 45 and over at the time of implementation, the existing state earnings-related arrangements will continue. This means that no one retiring during the rest of this century will be affected by the change and nor will any existing pensioner.

All rights built up in the state scheme at the time of the change will be honoured. In addition, we also intend to give a special enhancement of rights for men aged between 40 and 49 and women aged 35 to 44. They will be given a bonus of added years of entitlement, which will give them higher pensions when they eventually retire.

For those to be covered by the new arrangements the Government will lay down a minimum contribution level of 4 per cent. of earnings, at least half of which must be provided by the employer. The new arrangements will be phased in over three years. These changes will mean that in due course all employees will be contributing to their own additional pension through their jobs. This will represent the biggest ever extension of occupational pension coverage in this country and will add to the reforms of occupational pensions, involving improved rights for early leavers and transfer of pensions, currently in legislation before Parliament.

The Government must also ensure that the social security system is managed as effectively as possible to provide the best possible service to the public. The Government's benefit proposals will in themselves make the system simpler, but we are now to embark on the largest programme of computerisation ever undertaken in this country to modernise and improve its operation.

The benefit changes and the computerisation both of my Department and the Inland Revenue will provide opportunities to achieve better co-operation and closer working between the tax and benefit systems. The Government intend to take advantage of those opportunities and will be considering this further in the context of the Green Paper on personal taxation.

Meanwhile, we have decided to take a major step towards better harmonisation by aligning the tax and benefit years. Instead of benefits being uprated in November each year, the uprating date will be moved to April. This means that all tax and benefit changes will be implemented at the same time. It will also be of considerable assistance to local authorities which at present have to reassess housing benefit cases twice a year.

The change in the benefit year will be brought in at the time of implementation of the major structural reforms. We expect this to be in April 1987. After the uprating of benefits due at the end of November 1985, there will, therefore, be a 16-month period before the change in April 1987. It would clearly be wrong to allow such a gap between upratings, but it would not be practicable to have upratings both in November 1986 and April 1987. Accordingly, the Government have decided that, following the November 1985 uprating, there will be two upratings at eight-month intervals, the first in July 1986 and the second in April 1987.

The programme of reform that I have announced will provide a system which is easier to understand and simpler to administer. It will mean the most substantial changes in income-related support for 50 years, and for the first time give equal support for those in and out of work. It will

[Mr. Norman Fowler]

provide more help for low income families with children. It will establish a better partnership between state and individual provision, especially in pensions, giving everyone the right to his own pension with his job. Above all, the reforms will provide a modern social security system to take us into the next century.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that, behind all the rhetoric about restructuring, this statement represents the erosion of the fundamental principle of a welfare state for all citizens? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State was given a fair hearing.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Secretary of State further aware that the statement represents the reintroduction, for the first time this century, of Victorian values in an invidious distinction between deserving and undeserving poor? Is he also aware that this package as a whole will bring about a net loss in the next few years to pensioners and the unemployed of at least £1,000 million a year even before the huge losses from the abolition of SERPS begin, and that the main beneficiaries, whom he did not mention, will be the rich, who will receive even bigger tax handouts in future Tory Budgets?

We welcome the Government's limited reprieve on SERPS, in response to our demand. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a full day ahead of us.

Mr. Meacher: It is patently clear that the Government lost their nerve after their original intention had been made clear in repeated leaks. Is the Secretary of State aware that the Government's longer-term abolition of SERPS, which is the central arch of the welfare state, is still a betrayal of an unequivocal pledge by the Prime Minister three weeks before the last general election, when she said:

"nor are there any plans to change the earnings-related component of the State pension."

Is the Secretary of State aware that if SERPS were to continue it would roughly double the pension in the next 13 years, and that if it is abolished millions who would have enjoyed dignity and security without a means test in retirement will be forced into poverty? How does the Secretary of State justify the fact that women, low-paid workers, and the longer-term sick and disabled and the millions of carers who look after them will be shifted compulsorily into private schemes to which they will be forced to make higher contributions for less benefit?

Is the Secretary of State aware that there can be no justification for claiming that SERPS cannot be afforded in the next century, when the Government's own Social Security Advisory Committee said explicitly less than two years ago:

"At this distance of time we do not think there can be solid grounds for altering the scheme now for fear of all the worst outcomes occurring steadily for 40 years."

Is the Secretary of State aware that any allegations that SERPS cannot be afforded reflect not adverse demographic trends but an admission that the Government's policies will lead to longer-term economic stagnation?

Secondly, is the Secretary of State aware that the huge cuts in the housing benefit package will bring a loss to tenants of about £750 million a year, forcing up rents for tens of thousands by £7 to £12 a week? Is he aware that the poverty trap will be enormously intensified by his decision to increase the loss of housing benefit as wages rise from 38p in the pound to 70p in the pound? Is it not harshly unjust that the 7 million people receiving housing benefit, of whom 4 million are pensioners, will for the first time have to pay 20 per cent. of their rates and all of their water rates? Is he aware that nearly 2 million households now receiving housing benefit, of which the great majority are owner-occupier pensioners, especially widows with small occupational pensions, will lose it altogether?

Thirdly, this statement virtually makes the unemployed into the outcasts of society—the new undeserving poor in the Prime Minister's vision of this new Victorian poor law. Not content with clawing back £650 million a year from the unemployed by taxing unemployment benefit for the first time over the past three years, and not content with ending, three years ago, the earnings-related supplement to unemployment benefit, worth £16 a week to an average paid worker, the Government are now proposing to force the unemployed on to the lowest rate of the new income support scheme. Is the Secretary of State aware that that will take about £5 a week from those who are 25 or younger, will deprive them of all help with heating bills and of single payments for clothing and furniture, will force them, for the first time, to pay 20 per cent. of their rates and all of their water rates, and will replace the present basic benefit safety net by a discretionary and recoverable loan? The Government have trebled unemployment. With these cuts, they are now gratuitously twisting the knife in their victims.

Fourthly, families across the nation will be hit. Will the Secretary of State confirm that child benefit will be frozen or uprated by less than inflation, so that the benefit for 7 million mothers and 12 million children will begin to decline in real value? Will he confirm, too, that the new, vaunted family credit will begin to be phased out when earnings exceed £40 a week, which is lower than for the family income supplement, and that the rate of withdrawal will be 60p in the pound, which is higher than the 50p in the pound under FIS, so that the poverty trap will be worsened? Will he also confirm that benefit will be transferred from the woman to the man, which is not publicly supported, and that entitlement to free school meals and school milk will be ended? The Prime Minister has not only become the pensions snatcher — she remains the milk snatcher that she always was. Changes such as this will not strengthen family life, but will undermine it.

Fifthly, will the Secretary of State confirm that the death grant will be abolished and that the discretionary help will be available to the deceased's relatives only on the basis of a means test? Is he aware that this means bringing back for hundreds of thousands of our poor elderly the shame and indignity of a pauper's funeral, which no civilised society should inflict on its citizens?

This is a black day for the people of Britain — a monument to six harsh years of Thatcherite rule. The themes of this statement are more means testing, bigger cuts, penalising pensioners, the unemployed and low-paid in order to enrich still further the already rich, and the privatisation of the welfare state on the American model, which the people of this country want no more than they want the Prime Minister's fancy for the Americanising of our hospital management. There is no shred of political mandate for the proposals, since they derive from partisan

committees hand-picked by a partisan Government for predetermined ends. Today's statement opens up the central issue which will dominate the next general election and, because the Government have profoundly misunderstood the commitment of the British people to the welfare state, it will pave the way for the election of the next Labour Government.

Mr. Fowler: Not on anything that we have heard from the hon. Gentleman today will it pave the way for the election of any Labour Government. We have had from the hon. Gentleman a typically hysterical response. He cannot even get his shadow Cabinet to back his own proposals, and it was clear from the response of his Back Benchers that he could get very few of them to back what he was saying.

However, I am grateful for what I took to be the endorsement of my proposals on the state earnings-related pension scheme for the rest of this century. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the generous way in which he endorsed them.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the overall cost of pensions. The 1975 Act was based on the assumptions, which the then Labour Government were making, of 3 per cent. growth and 2·5 per cent. unemployment and, above all, that there would not be an appreciable increase in the number of pensioners. It is now clear that between 2010 and 2035 we shall see an increase of about 3 million in the number of pensioners, and that over the period to 2035 there will be an increase of about 4 million pensioners. In 1975 the Labour Government did not have that information, or, if they had it, they ignored it. The question before the House is whether to ignore the best advice and the best estimates that can be made today of the emerging costs of pensions.

As for the case for change, it is clear that the cost of the state earnings-related pension will increase very substantially.

In terms of income support, the new system gives a guaranteed weekly income, with higher rates for disabled people, pensioners and children. The hon. Gentleman is wrong about families, because, in addition, there will be a family premium, which families with children do not get at the moment.

At present, one in three households receives housing benefit—7·5 million households altogether. Costs have risen from £1·2 billion in 1979 to £4·2 billion today. I have made it clear, and I do so again, that we shall be looking to housing benefits to make significant reductions in the social security budget.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the social fund. I am sure that in his calmer moments he will agree that the present system of supplementary benefit is not serving well those who need special help and special care. One of the ways in which I hope that the social fund will be able to develop is to give special grants to people coming from institutions into the community, but also to pay to keep people at home and to support them, rather than their going into institutions.

The hon. Gentleman's comments on the death grant were a total travesty of our proposals. The death grant was last increased in 1967. It has remained at £30 since then. Surely no one will claim that that is adequate. The choice that has to be made is whether the country is prepared to go on with a token gesture of that kind or whether it makes more sense to give help directly to those who need it—to give full help and better help. That is what the Government want to do.

Mrs. Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Bearing in mind that this is the most far-reaching and fundamental statement on social security benefits for many years and that its soundness and sense will be apparent to everyone once it is properly explained, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that he will make a similar statement to every sector of the media which makes itself available and even consider the production of leaflets for the separate groups of people involved? Will my right hon. Friend also shoot down the myth put forward once again by the hon. and boringly predictable Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) that means tests should not be employed, because unless we employ means tests we cannot be sure that the maximum benefit will go to where the maximum need exists?

Mr. Fowler: We are not means testing, but seeking to test incomes. In addition, we are making help available to people on the basis of their income, and not according to whether they are in or out of work. That is a very significant change in approach. It means that the 100 per cent. marginal tax rates, which at the moment are a scandal, can come to an end. That is one of the most significant changes in the review.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent)): In view of the far-reaching nature of the proposals, and in view also of the cuts and additional means tests which they impose on some of our poorest people, will the right hon. Gentleman say, first, when the proposals were forecast and explained by the Prime Minister at the time of the last general election, and, secondly, exactly what is the saving on the social security budget which he aims to secure by these measures?

Mr. Fowler: When the inquiry into social security was set up we made it absolutely clear that the Government intended to have a fundamental review of the social security system. That has been the position throughout.

The right hon. Gentleman asks about the savings. The emphasis in the Green Paper is on the new structure. Until that is settled it is impossible to provide a detailed analysis, because clearly it depends on the benefit rates set in April 1987. However, the main direction of savings is clear. The major savings will be the long-term savings in the next century resulting from the phasing out of the state earnings-related pension scheme.

Changes in supplementary benefit structure are not intended to reduce the overall help provided. As a result of the structural changes in supplementary benefit, we shall ensure that as far as possible there are no cash losers. Support for low-income families will be increased by family credit. The Green Paper makes it clear that we expect spending on housing benefit to be reduced considerably. This will not be at once. We expect spending to be reduced eventually by about £500 million.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know that this is a statement of great interest to the House, but I have to bear in mind that there is another statement to follow it and that we are to have further debates in what will be a long day. The Secretary of State said that there would be a debate on this matter later. I shall allow questions to go on until 25

[Mr. Speaker]

minutes past five before we move to the next statement. If those who are called put short questions to the Secretary of State, I hope that I shall be able to include most hon. Members who are seeking to catch my eye.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his proposals are skilfully targeted at the changing and future shape of society and that he should ignore the ridiculous cries from the past from the Opposition? Does he further agree that, whether we like it or not, there is an increasing trend towards part-time work, which inevitably means part-time incomes, and that his proposals, by concentrating on improved social provision as part of income for the low-paid, is in line with that trend and reinforces those who are most dispossessed by the trend towards part-time work? Does he agree that the change will make a major contribution to the expansion of occupation and employment?

Mr. Fowler: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend. He is right. Family credit will bring direct help to low-paid families with children. It will prove a substantial base on which to build even further.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Does the Secretary of State agree that it is difficult to form a detailed judgment without the figures? My colleagues and I cannot support his proposals on pensions, because they do not tackle the present problems. The pension is too low, and we would not countenance any change unless there was some recognition of that. As for supplementary benefit, we are worried that we are drifting away from the Beveridge system, which applies to all, to a service exclusively for the poor. That would be wholly wrong. We are worried that if the Green Paper is fully implemented it will fracture the all-party consensus. We must consider the detail before making final decisions.

Mr. Fowler: I accept that my documents are long and detailed, and also what the hon. Gentleman says about his party's view. Lord Banks, the Liberal spokesman on social security in the other place, has said that the Liberal party consistently opposed the introduction of an earnings-related state pension scheme. It is not clear from what the hon. Gentleman said whether that remains Liberal policy.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): In view of my right hon. Friend's declared intention to modernise our social security system and to make it more responsive to changing social needs, will he introduce flexibility of retirement age and equality between men and women in eligibility? He will recall that that was proposed by the Select Committee and by me in a private Member's Bill in the previous Session of Parliament.

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend will find that in the Green Paper we deal with flexibility in retirement. I do not pretend that there are easy answers to that matter, but, like him, I should like there to be more flexibility. We invite comments on what we have set out in the Green Paper as a decade of retirement.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): As the Secretary of State has boasted that the four reviews will result in nothing less than a new Beveridge, will he give two pieces of information so that we can see to what extent the reviews live up to that self-imposed objective? If the Government enact all of these proposals, how many people will cease to be poor? Secondly, as the hon. Gentleman acted as co-ordinator for all four reviews, can he say how many people will gain and how many people will lose? Will he give a commitment that those who bear unemployment will not have their benefits cut further?

Mr. Fowler: For various reasons, I cannot give the figures for which the hon. Gentleman asks. As I explained to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), no detailed analysis of cost can be made until benefit rates have been set in April 1987. [HON. MEMBERS: "How much will it cost?"] My answer is entirely frank and reasonable.

As for help to the poor, family credit and other proposals in the review will reduce poverty. The social security system must be capable of coping with changes in the pattern of poverty. We have proposed family credit because we have considered the pattern of poverty in detail and it is clear that, in the past 15 years, families with children have been most in need.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Will my right hon. Friend accept from one who has expressed reservations that there is a great deal to commend in these proposals and much that is long overdue? Will he confirm that those who are most likely to be affected by changes in housing benefit include widows and occupational pensioners? Is my right hon. Friend open to some suggestions on that matter, because the changes in housing benefit seem to lie strangely with his commendation of occupational pension schemes? My right hon. Friend said that on the phasing out of the state earnings-related pension people would have a right to opt for a private pension scheme. What happens if people choose not to exercise that right and reach retirement age with nothing but the basic pension?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments about the review. I hope that the Green Paper will go some way to meet the issues that he has in mind. Housing benefit goes further up the income scale than any other benefit. On that basis, it is more reasonable to look for economies there, bearing in mind the scale of the increase in expenditure on housing benefit in the past six years. There will be minimum requirements for individual pensions. Employees and employers will be required to make provision. There is no question of people in work reaching pension age without having an additional occupational, personal or industry-wide pension.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Government are making social security a scapegoat for the failure of their economic policies and that, instead of caring more for the growing number of casualties of their incompetence, they are planning to care less? That means that the Government are incompetent and insensitive to the poverty, degradation and suffering caused by the unemployment that they have created.

Mr. Fowler: I do not accept that for one moment. We all respect the right hon. Gentleman's knowledge and experience in these matters, and I hope to dissuade him from that view. Few people in the country or the House believe that the present social security system is capable of continuing without major change. This is the first Government to tackle that problem for 40 years. The Government and the country have a responsibility to

change the social security system to provide a modern system which can be sustained by present contributors and our children.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): I am delighted to support much in my right hon. Friend's statement, but will he confirm that the Green Paper is not a White Paper in disguise and that no decisions have been made? How will the income support system affect pensioners who do not claim a supplementary pension? As to housing benefit, may I stress the grave anxiety for pensioners, the value of whose savings has been destroyed and whose financial circumstances have been undermined by their not having inflation-proof pensions? They must not be worse off as a result of these proposals.

Mr. Fowler: This is a Green Paper. The purpose of the review has been to consult the public. We shall continue to consult the public and to listen to issues that are raised with us. The simplicity of the income support scheme will bring immeasurable benefit to all. I remind my hon. Friend of what we are doing to preserve the interests of people approaching pension age. Nobody who retires this century will be affected by the changes in the state earnings-related scheme. It goes without saying that rights which have accrued and which are in payment will be honoured fully. That includes inflation-proofing.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Will the Secretary of State confirm that today he has praised the Beveridge report only to bury it, and that he is ratting on promises made not only about the state earnings-related pension scheme but about child benefit and help for the unemployed? Will he confirm that under these new poor laws 7 million people will receive less in housing benefit, and that 1·8 million people — 3,000 in every constituency—will lose help with rent and rates? Will the Secretary of State tell us by how much the basic pension and the supplementary pension will have to rise to compensate for the loss of heating, dietary and clothing additions and the death grant, and for his demand that the poor should pay 20 per cent. of the rates? Why is it that the poorest, the weakest and the most frail in our community have to pay the price for his Government's economic failure?

Mr. Fowler: That is not the case, and the hon. Gentleman is too intelligent to believe that it is. I have made it clear that there will be reductions in housing benefit, but I have to point out to the hon. Gentleman a fact which he probably knows well enough in any event —that housing benefit expenditure has increased from £1·2 billion in 1979 to £4·2 billion in 1985-86.

The hon. Gentleman also knows that housing benefit expenditure goes further up the income scale than any other benefit. We are spending £40 billion a year on social security. Furthermore, spending on social security by this Government has increased by about 30 per cent. The majority of that increase is spent not on unemployment benefit but on making improvements in real benefits. It helps absolutely nobody to believe that expenditure of this kind can continue in a totally uncontrolled manner. I believe that our proposals are fair to the public and will help to bring about the recovery of the economy that we all want.

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the wide welcome that there will be for the better targeting of benefits, for the concentration of help on families in need and for basing benefit on take-home pay and reducing the poverty and unemployment traps. Does my right hon. Friend agree that one aspect of the poverty trap has been the way in which supplementary benefit has been the gateway to a plethora of other benefits? Will he elaborate upon how far these various additions will be consolidated into the income support system and upon how free school meals will be related to the family credit system?

Mr. Fowler: As a general aim, the Government are trying to make benefits available equally on the basis of income. In other words, rather than having the distinctions that exist now between those on supplementary benefit and those in work—as my hon. Friend points out, having passports which take one to particular benefits — we shall make the same benefits available on the basis of equality of income, whether people are in work or out of work. I should make it clear that we intend to include some of the extra benefits in family credits and to pay those benefits in cash rather than in kind.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Is the Secretary of State aware that the United Kingdom is lagging behind a number of other European countries in providing this type of benefit and that these proposals will push us further down the league? Is he also aware that some of the poorest people in our society will experience the rigours of the Victorian workhouse? As maternity and death grants will be means tested and paid for out of a so-called discretionary fund, does the Secretary of State not realise that people will be means tested literally from the cradle to the grave?

Mr. Fowler: There is a profound misunderstanding of the Government's proposals. They are based upon a test of net income. If one believes in trying to target help on those who need it most, it is impossible to devise any other way to bring that about. Therefore, I ask the right hon. Gentleman to study with greater care the proposals in the Green Paper. As for the social fund, I do not think that anybody would defend the present position under which additional payments are made. It does not work. It has not worked for some time. The social fund will enable us to provide a more sensitive and better targeted way of providing help for those in need.

Dr. Brian Mawhinney (Peterborough): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his concentration of help on families with children and the testing of incomes is very welcome and will be widely supported in the country? Can he confirm that the contributions to SERPS of those who will not be retiring this century will, nevertheless, be inflation-proofed against price rises, to cover the time when they will receive the benefit of the contributions that they have made?

Mr. Fowler: The position of any man over the age of 50 and of any woman over the age of 45 is preserved. The accrued rights of people generally are also preserved in the same way.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland): Is it not outrageous that the Secretary of State should come to the House this afternoon and claim to be proposing a new Beveridge and yet be quite unable or unwilling to tell us how many will gain and how many will lose under these proposals? Out of the many thousands of poor people who

[Mr. Derek Foster]

will lose under these proposals, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us how many pensioners with small occupational pensions will have their heating and dietary additions removed?

Mr. Fowler: I dealt with that question in some detail when I answered the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). The purpose of the social security review is to put forward a new structure and to seek the views of the House and the public on that structure. It is impossible to provide a detailed analysis of the cost until the benefit rates have been set. I have been entirely frank in saying that we expect there to be significant savings in housing benefit. I gave that figure to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Given the huge size of the social security budget—£40 billion a year—and given also the growth of that budget, its complexity and the muddle and confusion which appear to be rife within it, does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be a thoroughly irresponsible Government who did not undertake these long overdue reforms? Does he accept that we shall all benefit—taxpayers, recipients and particularly the less well-off—and that the people of this country will have cause to give thanks to my right hon. Friend, particularly after several upratings in 1987?

Mr. Fowler: There is no question but that a re-examination of the social security system was long overdue. There is also no question but that the majority of the public share that view. I believe that many Opposition Members secretly share that view, too. This Government have had the courage to undertake that review. The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) laughs, but the only thing that the last Labour Government did was to ask a team of officials to look at the supplementary benefit scheme. That is not the way to reform social security, and that is not the way in which this Government propose to reform it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is it not clear that the Secretary of State is refusing to give these figures for singularly party political advantage? Has he forgotten what was contained in the Conservative party's manifesto at the last general election? The Conservative party gave a solemn undertaking to the British people that it would protect pensions and other linked long-term benefits against rising prices. Has not that solemn undertaking been broken today? Is it not clear that the Government do not have a mandate for pursuing this policy? Their only reason for pursuing it is that they cannot make their economic strategy work. They cannot make the nation pay the bill. They have failed.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman has not understood a single word of what has been said today. We stand entirely by the words to which he referred. We have kept pensions up with prices, and we have also tackled inflation. Under the Labour Government inflation increased by 110 per cent., which was a cruel blow to pensioners.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): Will my right hon. Friend accept my warmest congratulations on his decision that occupational pensions should be based on real funding, and on his courage in slaying the Hydra of the state earnings-related scheme, which is not even an honest system of repartition? With regard to benefits that will still be based on a redistribution of the national income, would it not have been more logical and practical to integrate the income tax wholly with the contributory system, so that the residual welfare state, which is still concealed inside the income tax system, could be integrated into a logical new system of benefits?

Mr. Fowler: I have much sympathy with what my hon. Friend says, but we are still some distance from that position. First, we must computerise the DHSS system. We are taking several steps in a direction which my hon. Friend would support. The alignment of the tax and benefit years is a major improvement. Family credit will prove a natural system for bringing together social security and tax affairs, and computerisation will undoubtedly help. Some of the further points put forward by my hon. Friend can be examined in the Green Paper which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will introduce later this year.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Is the Secretary of State aware that his statement is a kick in the teeth for all disabled people, especially for the non-industrial disabled, who do not receive disablement benefit? They depend for 20 per cent. of their incomes on the additional allowances, such as the heating allowance, which, at a stroke, he is abolishing. Have the Government considered compulsory euthanasia as a way of solving their monetary problems? It seems to me and to millions of disabled people that they are being sacrificed on the altar of Conservative monetarism.

Mr. Fowler: That is a very silly intervention. The hon. Gentleman must understand—if he does not, he had better read the document—that the income support scheme will include a special premium for the disabled. I advise the hon. Gentleman to look at that.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): As someone who represents 70,000 pensioners, may I ask my right hon. Friend to accept that they will welcome his proposal for a review of the housing benefit scheme, which will be to their advantage? Does he further accept that the widow's grant of £1,000 will be widely welcomed? Will he, as he said earlier, accept further representations?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, indeed. On any of the proposals made in the Green Paper, the Government will wish to hear representations from interested organisations outside the House and from hon. Members. The widows' arrangements are more flexible and better targeted than the present ones, but I am open to suggestions on how to improve them.

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that almost everyone in the House accepts the need for some reform—*[Interruption.]* I shall put my question in my own way. From so many proposals, there must be one or two that can be accepted by us all. Is not the real indictment that the Government seem to be incapable of creating a society without 4 million unemployed? In those circumstances, there is no possibility of obtaining a consensus on the broad approach to social reform. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the poorest section of the community—those in

receipt of supplementary benefit — will not be cash losers? He used the phrase. Can he explain what he means by it?

Mr. Fowler: Exactly what I said. We shall ensure that the structural changes will not result in cash losses by those who are now in receipt of supplementary benefit. I accept the hon. Gentleman's more general point. The aim is not to increase and improve social security benefits. The aim is to reach a position whereby we can reduce unemployment and dependence on those benefits.

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his proposals on SERPS will be widely welcomed because they are founded on common sense? Will he confirm that the required mandatory contribution for additional pension provisions, which is set at 4 per cent.—half of which will be paid by the employer—is only one third of the contribution rate normally applicable in occupational pension schemes and, therefore, should be financially acceptable and is basically sensible?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, I can confirm that. I can also confirm—I know that my hon. Friend has expressed anxiety about this — that the contribution will be available for personal pensions as well as for occupational pensions or for membership of industry-wide schemes.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take two more questions from each side, and in the debate that is to follow I shall give preference to those hon. Members who have not been called today.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): On the question of alleviating family poverty, will the Secretary of State explain why, under the proposed family credit plan, payments will go direct to the pay packet? Given that that represents a major redistribution of wealth in the family away from mothers, would it not be better to adapt that proposal before the White Paper is published so that mothers can claim it if they wish? As to the income support scheme, is not the most glaring omission the fact that the right hon. Gentleman has firmly set his face against an extension of the rate to the long-term unemployed, who are the new poor under the Government's policies?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman must remember that we are adding a family premium to the income support scheme. The family premium and children's rates will be added to the standard rate, which will provide help where it is needed—among low-income families with children. As to the argument about the purse to the wallet, it is more sensible to make family credit part of the total income from work. That will improve the present poor take-up of family income supplement, which has caused us anxiety for a long time. Although initially it will be assessed by the DHSS, there is no reason why it should not go into the pay-as-you-earn system, which is something that the hon. Gentleman might welcome.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's efforts to rebuild personal incentive, and especially his help to families with children, who are by far and away the largest proportion of people with below accepted nutritional standards. The new family credit scheme will help to equate those who work with those who do not, and the £1,000 grant to widows at a difficult time in their lives will be welcomed. May I also congratulate him on his efforts to co-ordinate the tax and benefits systems, which was recommended to the Chancellor of the Exchequer by the Select Committee on tax credits 13 years ago?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's generous welcome for the proposals. One area that caused those who conducted the review most anxiety was that of low-income families with children. That is what the proposals try to tackle, and I believe that family credit will make a great contribution.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Should not this supposed Green Paper be simply titled "Dismantling the Welfare State"? As the right hon. Gentleman claims that he cannot give figures — that has been a persistent theme of his responses today — will he publish an assessment, based on demographic developments and Treasury forecasts, of a range of likely benefit payments in the April 1987 Budget, so that the people of this country can judge for themselves the damaging implications of this developement before the next general election?

Mr. Fowler: There will be no difficulty in finding out the implications of the proposals before the next general election. In the Green Paper we have tried to set out the structural reforms and changes that we are making. That is an entirely proper and right course to take in a Green Paper. A White Paper and a Bill will follow and go into even more detail.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): As my right hon. Friend's Department is responsible for 43 per cent. of all Government spending, will he confirm that help will continue to be concentrated on those who are most in need and that his proposals will result in a more efficient service, which, in turn, will mean that resources are used more adequately and efficiently?

Mr. Fowler: I very much hope that we shall be able to achieve the last part of what my hon. Friend has set out. There is no doubt that we need a modern system of social security which provides a better service. The present system does not achieve that, and I believe that it is common ground on both sides of the House that we should move towards that goal.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Secretary of State aware that he was wrong when he said that the majority of increased spending on social security since 1979 has been devoted to improve benefits?

Will the right hon. Gentleman give the House an assurance that, given the magnitude of this exercise, we will have not merely a one-day debate, but a two-day debate, so that we may explore fully the implications of his statement?

On the funding of SERPS, does the Secretary of State recall that in 1954 the Phillips committee said that the pension could not be afforded over the next 30 years? If we had listened to that committee, the pension would be about £15 a week today and retirement ages would be 63 and 68. Does that not show the folly of making drastic decisions now about unknowable circumstances 50 years on?

Are we seriously expected to believe that the Government are launching this massive exercise without being able to estimate any costs until the benefit rates are

[Mr. Meacher]

fixed in 1987? Is that not utterly irresponsible, or is it that this Treasury-dominated cuts exercise still has a long way to run and that, given pressure from the Treasury, the overall cuts may turn out to be £2 billion or more?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is getting carried away again. I have already given the figure and, like everyone else, the hon. Gentleman listened to it. Since 1979 the majority of increased spending has gone on extra benefits and beneficiaries.

Mr. Meacher: Ah!

Mr. Fowler: I should point out to the hon. Gentleman — just in case he should have other ideas — that additional beneficiaries have to be paid for.

I cannot commit my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to a two-day debate. Certainly, we are committed to a debate. The hon. Gentleman made the classic dud point about the Phillips committee. I ask him to go back to the committee. The one figure that it was able to predict with almost total accuracy was the future number of pensioners. That is the great difference between the situation in 1975 and the situation now. On the best predictions that can be made, we shall need policies for dealing with between 3 million and 4 million more pensioners in the first half of the next century. That is the best estimate, and I advise the hon. Gentleman to accept it.

Sri Lankan Tamils

5.34 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Leon Brittan): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement.

On 20 May, in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples), I announced my future policy towards Sri Lankan Tamils who expressed a fear of return to Sri Lanka. In the week following that statement, more than 500 Tamils arrived here seeking asylum. I decided that further measures were necessary to reduce the influx and, after consultation with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, I announced on 29 May the imposition of a visa requirement for Sri Lankan citizens, to come into effect the following day. The need for such a measure was demonstrated by the fact that 244 Tamils arrived on 29 May. A further 76 Tamils arrived shortly after the visas requirement came into effect, but there have been no further arrivals over the weekend or so far today.

The imposition of a visa requirement will not prevent the entry of those Sri Lankan citizens who qualify for admission in the normal way—for example, as visitors or students — although they will, of course, have to obtain visas before travelling. It will save the cost and disappointment of wasted journeys for those who would not be allowed to enter because they do not qualify under the immigration rules. If a Tamil not qualifying under the rules and seeking in present circumstances to leave Sri Lanka wishes to come to this country, he will be able to apply for a visa. Such applications will, however, be granted only if the individual can show that he is suffering severe hardship and the circumstances — including, for example, family links with this country — warrant the exercise of discretion in his favour outside the normal immigration rules.

The position of all the Tamils who have recently arrived will continue to be considered individually on the basis set out on 20 May. Where an application for asylum is refused, there will be an opportunity for the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to consider the case and representations from Members of Parliament will continue to be considered.

It was only with great reluctance that I decided that it was necessary to impose a visa requirement on a fellow Commonwealth country. The need for it will be kept under review and I hope that it can be lifted in due course.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Is the Home Secretary aware that his statement represents a major departure from two important traditions? For the first time, Commonwealth citizens — albeit from only one Commonwealth country at the moment—will require a visa to enter this country. Secondly, the British tradition of offering haven and hospitality to those seeking asylum has been breached.

Does the Home Secretary agree that some Tamils who came here were very much in fear for their safety in Sri Lanka and that that was the motive which prompted them to seek asylum in this country, as it prompted many of their fellow countrymen to seek asylum in Germany and other countries in Europe? Is the Home Secretary aware

that we are asking that the tradition of granting temporary admission for those in fear for their safety which has operated for many years should be continued?

How long will those applying for a visa in Sri Lanka have to wait before it is granted? Have those who are fearful for their safety any chance of being granted a visa to come to this country and seek temporary admission while their claims for asylum are being considered? How many Tamils arrived in this country seeking asylum in May?

My final point was not mentioned by the Home Secretary: What is the reason for the diminution of the rights of hon. Members to make representations on behalf of our constituents or relatives of our constituents? Why has the tradition of making such representations been whittled away to a 24-hour period? Will the Home Secretary explain the reasons for that and tell us how the system is to work? In fact, will he drop that provision?

Mr. Brittan: With regard to the alleged major departures, the hon. Gentleman is right to say that up to now visas have not been required for Commonwealth citizens coming to this country. I regret the fact that it should be necessary to impose such a requirement for the first time. However, other Commonwealth countries, such as Australia, Bangladesh, Nigeria and India, require British citizens to have visas. It is also the case that most Western European countries require persons from Sri Lanka to have visas.

With regard to a breach of our tradition of haven and hospitality, I cannot accept that the position is for a moment as the hon. Gentleman said. It seems to me to be far more sensible that the question whether someone is likely to suffer severe hardship should be considered in Sri Lanka itself by appropriate representatives of the British Government than that people should simply come to this country, having nowhere to go to, and have to be dealt with at Heathrow or Gatwick. There is nothing in the slightest bit more humane than a policy that allows people to come in, provided that there is machinery for considering whether they would suffer severe hardship and whether this country is the appropriate place for them to go. Let us not forget that large numbers have gone to India and not been refused admission.

With regard to coming here to seek temporary admission, that is inconsistent with the changes that I announced on 20 and 29 May. For the reasons that I gave just now, it is preferable for the question whether someone is suffering the sort of severe hardship that would lead to them being admitted to the United Kingdom to be considered in Sri Lanka itself. The number of officials dealing with the matter is being strengthened—two have gone out, two more are being transferred by the Foreign Office and another two are going there on 1 July. I cannot say how long it will take to consider applications.

I can give the numbers coming to Britain during the month of May. From 1 May to 15 May, approximately 240 arrived. From 16 May up to and including 20 May, when I made the previous statement, 218 came. But between 21 May and 27 May, a total of 532 came; 26 came on Tuesday 28 May; and on the day that I made the announcement about visa requirements, 244 came. Therefore, the number was accelerating. Of that there is no question.

Referring to the rights of Members of Parliament, the hon. Gentleman has, I am sure unwittingly, misrepresented the situation. There was never any question of these cases being considered within 24 hours. I made that clear in my statement. I said that in the process of proper consideration, which of course will be given to people whether they are here or applying for a visa in Sri Lanka, it was reasonable, in the case of those who are here, to ask Members of Parliament to make their representations, which are only a part of the process, within 24 hours if at all possible.

A delegation of hon. Members came to see me about that matter, and I made it clear to them that if, in a particular case, there were special difficulties that made it impossible for them to make their representations as quickly as that, they should inform the Home Office and we would consider a short extension of the time during which the representations could be made. However, I believe that it is reasonable, in the interests of the Tamils as much as anything else, that the representations should be made quickly, and that it should not simply be possible for Members of Parliament to take an indefinite period of time to make representations, particularly when, as I have made clear, the machinery for considering all the points in an individual case, whether put forward by the individual, UKIAS or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, was fully in place.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, when I had the opportunity of visiting Sri Lanka earlier this year, I formed the view that the Tamils in the north of the country lived in fear of their lives because of the possible over-reaction by the army to Tamil terrorist incidents, such as the recent one at Anuradhapura, where a number of Sinhalese were not only in fear of their lives but were killed? Elsewhere in Sri Lanka, where the Tamils are in a minority, they are nevertheless active and involved members of the community, but some of them naturally fear the possibilities of a backlash against them, with rioting and bloodshed such as has occurred in the past.

However, does my right hon. and learned Friend also accept that we are talking of a population of about 3 million people, and it is unrealistic to expect this country to open its doors to a number of people approaching that figure who believe that they are in fear of their lives? This is a serious and worrying internal problem. It may well be one that other people will have to help the Sri Lankan authorities to solve. It will not be solved by us opening our doors to anything up to 3 million Tamils.

Mr. Brittan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his analysis of the situation. I had the benefit of talking to him about it shortly after he returned from Sri Lanka. He is right; I do not in any way underestimate the gravity of the problem. It is complex and must have a political solution. I welcome the fact that there have been recent discussions, as the House will be aware, between President Jayawardene and Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. I hope that such contacts can lead to a solution of the problem.

There has been disorder in Sri Lanka. As my hon. Friend said, the position will vary from one part of the country to another. But it is not the case that we have a situation that is in any way analogous to that of Amin's Uganda, for example, where the Government were seeking to persecute a particular minority, because, as the House will be aware, prominent members of the Tamil community hold extremely prominent positions in Sri Lanka. It is worth mentioning that the Minister of Home

[Mr. Brittan]

Affairs, the Minister of Rural Industrial Development, the Chief Justice and the governor of the Central Bank are all Tamils. Such a situation would have been inconceivable for Ugandan Asians during Amin's regime.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Is the Home Secretary aware that, whatever the cause of the internal problems in Sri Lanka, his view of the reality in that country is greatly different from that of the Tamils, who are outnumbered by about four to one by the Sinhalese, and who clearly need some help and sympathetic refuge? Why was there no mention in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's statement of talks with the Commonwealth? Is it not important for the Commonwealth to be involved corporately with this urgent problem, which involves two of its members? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman support the moves for an early debate on the Floor of the House on the Liberal prayer against the changes in the immigration rules?

Mr. Brittan: I hardly think that the hon. Gentleman seriously expects me to give an answer to his final point. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will consider it. Of course, it is a general problem of an international nature. The most able and best placed countries to deal with it are, of course, Sri Lanka and India. However, if my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary can assist in any way, of course he is ready to do so.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many of my constituents are concerned that any Tamils have been allowed into the country at all? Many people in my constituency and, I am sure, up and down the land feel that this country has done enough. Enough is enough. We have our own problems across the board, from unemployment to social services. When will the first Tamils be sent back, because the Government of Sri Lanka have clearly said that there is no threat to their existence in that country?

Mr. Brittan: Ten Tamils were returned not to Sri Lanka but to European countries and, I believe, in one case, to India, over the weekend. With regard to the others, the process outlined in my statement of 20 May and today's statement will be followed. Careful consideration will be given. However, my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that on 31 May President Jayawardene gave our high commissioner a formal personal assurance that no Tamils returned to Sri Lanka would be harassed or persecuted in any way. That is something that we shall certainly seek to build and rely on as the situation develops.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will not this disgraceful change in the appeals procedures and visa requirements result in many Tamil refugees in Britain being sent back to arbitrary arrest or even death? The Home Office says that only 1 per cent. of Tamil refugees in Britain are genuine refugees. Is the Home Secretary aware that Germany has accepted 95 per cent. of its 10,000 Tamil refugees as genuine? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman realise that his remarks give credence to the crude racism coming from some of the gutter newspapers and Tory Back Benchers who talk of stemming a flood when 1,300 refugees spread equally across the country would mean that a city the size of Coventry could absorb eight more people out of a third of a million? Where is the flood there?

Are not the arrangements which have been announced today — which were made during a recess so that Parliament could not question them and which were announced in a written answer of 20 May — just the kick-back from this Government to repay the discussions that the Prime Minister had in April with President Jayawardene and in exchange for a new naval base for America and Britain in Sri Lanka and for influence in the Indian ocean?

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman's observations are extravagant and inaccurate. There has been no change whatsoever in the appeals procedures. The hon. Gentleman's reference to the statement that 1 per cent. of Tamil refugees are genuine shows that he has not distinguished between refugees under the convention and persons who might be subject to severe hardship and who would be considered outside the rules. There is a complete difference between the two. The German rules and appeal procedure are quite different. There is a clear distinction between the very small number of people who are counted as refugees and those who might qualify under the policy which I announced on 20 May and reaffirmed today.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): The United Kingdom has an honourable record in giving refuge over the years to hundreds of thousands of people who have suffered from persecution in their own countries. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we must continue to give that refuge and that it is vital for care to be taken in assessing those who are genuine refugees so as not to dilute the status of refugees, past, present and future? Will he assure the House that once a person has proved his status as a refugee, fleeing from a totalitarian regime, we shall still treat him with humanity and not as part of immigration control?

Mr. Brittan: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. There is no question but that we will honour to the full in spirit and in letter our obligations under the convention relating to refugees. My hon. Friend is absolutely right in saying that no useful purpose is served by seeking to muddy the waters, as the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) does, and to confuse the position of genuine refugees and others for whom one may have a considerable degree of sympathy, but who are not necessarily refugees.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Is it not shameful that a Home Secretary whose family sought refuge in this country has slammed the door in the face of those coming from a Commonwealth country who believed that their lives were in jeopardy? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give a clear assurance that no Tamils who have sought entry to Britain will be returned directly to Sri Lanka? Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman understand that Tamils awaiting entry clearance in Colombo — for a month or even longer — face harassment, injury and possible death? Will he give a clear assurance that no Tamils will be returned until there has been a proper opportunity for full inquiries to be made? Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman recognise that it is an insult to hon. Members and to parliamentary democracy for these shameful decisions to have been taken when the House was in recess?

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman's personal references are wholly inaccurate, but I do not think that he greatly worries about that. The initial statement of policy was made on 20 May in a written answer to the House. It was capable of being challenged in the normal way. The subsequent change was necessitated by escalating numbers of people who were arriving on our doorstep. I do not believe that there would be anything in the least humane in allowing that process to continue unimpeded. Today's statement was made at the earliest possible opportunity after the recess.

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): The calm and moderate Tamil community here realise that this country is in a difficult position over the possibility of a mass immigration of Tamils. They will understand that it was necessary for my right hon. and learned Friend to take some steps. Will regular visitors to this country — business men, politicians and others—who are Tamils, coming from countries other than Ceylon, have the opportunity to obtain a visa in a much shorter time than two months? I shall write to my right hon. and learned Friend about a particular case.

Mr. Brittan: I appreciate my hon. Friend's statement. I should like to take this opportunity to pay my tribute to the Tamil community in this country who, faced with a tremendously difficult situation, have been able in a very short period to look after a large number of people. It is not our intention to prevent people who would be eligible in the normal way from coming to this country. Obviously, within the context of the visa regime, we shall want to do everything that we can to ensure that that happens as quickly as possible.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. An application under Standing Order No. 10 will be made immediately after this statement and, in fairness to Scottish Members who are concerned with the following business, I shall take two further questions from each side.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the Home Secretary accept that his performance since 20 May on this issue has been one of disgraceful subterfuge of the House and Members of Parliament? Why, when a delegation of three hon. Members—my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) and myself — met him on 29 May, did he not tell us that he was planning to announce visa restrictions the following day? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that last week the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Hartling, had an extended meeting with representatives of most European countries and many others and discussed this and many other matters? The statements of that meeting which came from Mr. Hartling's office suggested that he was highly critical of the attitude taken by the British and Dutch Governments.

Should not the right hon. and learned Gentleman look once again at the reports that he received from Sri Lanka which suggested that improvements were taking place? There is no evidence whatever to support that idea. Indeed, all the evidence points to a deterioration and danger to the Tamil people because of the position in Sri Lanka. Is it not incompatible for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to make statements such as the one he made this afternoon while the British Government continue to supply arms and to train army officers in Sri Lanka, showing exactly on which side of the communal divide in Sri Lanka they have placed themselves?

Mr. Brittan: Neither the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) nor anyone else has said anything to suggest that there has been a subterfuge. The policy was announced first in a statement on 20 May, then in an announcement on 29 May, and today a statement has been made in the House. At least the hon. Member for Islington, North was good enough to state that the strictures of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees covered the Dutch Government as well. The fact is that virtually all the countries of western Europe have found it necessary to operate a visa regime. I therefore feel no need to apologise for taking action which was necessitated by circumstances that were not the making of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his action to protect Britain from this type of immigration through the excuse that some Tamils are——

Mr. Nellist: Excuse!

Mr. Wells: It has been used as an excuse on a type of immigration which should not take place and which protects them through the visa requirements. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend also on jealously guarding our proud reputation of providing a political refuge for those who are genuinely in danger in their own country. Will he ensure that his requirements apply equally to Tamils and Sinhalese who apply to this country for entry? The Sinhalese are also under attack from the Tamil guerrillas in many parts of southern Sri Lanka and their lives are in danger. Has my right hon. and learned Friend made strong representations to the Indian Government to prevent further Tamil aggression and the supply of Tamil guerrillas from India? If preventive measures were implemented, they would put an end to this immigration and the need for Tamils to try to enter this country.

Mr. Brittan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said at the beginning of his remarks. I shall draw his latter remarks to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

As far as I am aware, there have not been any applications from Sinhalese, as opposed to Tamils, seeking refuge or asylum. If there are, I shall keep in mind my hon. Friend's points.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): Will the Home Secretary be more trenchant in rejecting the attitude expressed by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), who believes that this country can be insulated against its responsibilities for refugees out of line with other European countries that subscribe to refugee responsibilities?

Should we not be ultra careful in handling these matters on an individual basis? I have experience in these matters, and I ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman to consider one particular aspect. It appears to be mostly single young men, rather than families, who are seeking refugee status. They have many anxious relatives both in this country and in northern Sri Lanka, who are scared that they may become involved in terrorist activities in southern India or

[Mr. Sydney Bidwell]

elsewhere. They have combined their efforts to ensure that these young men came to Europe to escape that. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman keep that in mind when deciding on individual cases? The majority of such young men are asking for refuge for only a limited period, not for all time.

Mr. Brittan: I recognise what the hon. Gentleman says and respect his great experience in these matters. However, I do not really think that someone subject to pressure to become involved in Tamil terrorism could regard that as a reason to come to Britain. It is possible to avoid being involved in Tamil terrorism, as evidenced by the many millions of Tamils wo have succeeded in doing just that and have not had to resort to coming to Britain.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there has been a massive misrepresentation of his actions, especially in the press and on television? It has been suggested that many Members of Parliament have asked him to allow more Tamils into Britain. The truth is that the majority of hon. Members are against that, as are the large majority of people in the country. My right hon. and learned Friend has acted moderately and responsibly. Britain is no longer a colonial power, and the main responsibility lies with India. He should stick to his guns.

Mr. Brittan: I am most grateful for my hon. Friend's support.

Later——

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance in relation to the very important statement on the Tamils. There are about 2,000 Tamils living in Ealing, which has within it the excellent weekend Tamils' school. Therefore, I represent a considerable number of them. It would be helpful, in advance of statements such as this, if hon. Members with particular concerns could notify you, Mr. Speaker, of their interest so that you would know of their anxiety to catch your eye.

Mr. Speaker: That was a good try by the hon. Gentleman. My feeling is that he does fairly well. It would be ideal if I could call every hon. Member who rose. I allow as good an opportunity as possible for hon. Members to put questions on statements. However, with the best will in the world, and in fairness to other hon. Members, it is not possible for me to call everyone who wishes to question a Minister.

Immigration (European Court Judgment)

6·4 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the urgent need to re-examine the cases of those husbands and male fiancés whose refusal of admission to Britain is placed in question by the decision of the European court."

The matter is specific because it relates to a judgment delivered in the European Court of Human Rights six days ago, during the recess. It is extraordinary that the Home Secretary has not come forward with a statement today, and that makes this application all the more necessary.

The matter is important because the European court has on two counts found that the British Government are in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, and accordingly have been acting unlawfully for almost six years. First, the Government have been acting unlawfully because the applicants to the court have been victims of discrimination on the ground of sex, in violation of article 14 taken together with article 8. Secondly, there has been a violation of article 13 of the convention, which provides that everyone whose rights and freedoms as set forth in the convention are violated should have an effective remedy before the national authority, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity.

The matter should have urgent consideration for two reasons. First, the law as embodied in the 1983 immigration rules — which continues and, indeed, exacerbates the sexual discrimination of which this Government have been found guilty—clearly must be changed speedily. It is essential that this House should be able to express a view on how that law should be changed before the Government reach an irrevocable conclusion. It is essential that the Government accept the spirit of the European court's judgment, rather than seek to avoid their responsibilities arising out of the judgment by changing for the worse the immigration status of wives and female fiancees. It is essential that the Government give an unambiguous commitment to abolish the sexually discriminatory primary purpose rule.

Secondly, the House must debate the matter urgently to safeguard the 3,350 husbands and male fiancés whose applications have been refused since November 1979, and who share with the menfolk of the successful applicants at Strasbourg the injustice that the Government have committed. In all justice, those men must have their rejected applications urgently considered afresh in the light of their legal rights as established by the Strasbourg judgment. After some of them have had their rights withheld for nearly six years, and thousands for a substantial, if lesser, period, it would be wrong if they and their female partners, who are suffering injustice with them, should have to apply afresh and wait a further long period for interviews and decisions.

It would be wholly unacceptable if those unjustly treated men were made to wait in suspense until the Government changed the rules — and did so in a restrictive manner which would extinguish the legal rights established by the European court's judgment.

Major principles of justice are involved. Within those principles, the individual rights of thousands of men, women and families are at stake. It is the right and the duty of this House of Commons to debate and consider how best properly to safeguard those rights before the Government act in the way that the Secretary of State acted, precipitately and without notice last week, and without the House being given an opportunity to debate the issue.

In the light of those considerations, Mr. Speaker, I request that you grant my application.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the urgent need to re-examine the cases of those husbands and male fiancés whose refusal of admission to Britain since 1980 is placed in question by a decision of the European court."

The right hon. Gentleman and the House know that the decision that I have to take is whether to give this matter precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I listened carefully to what the right hon. Gentleman said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he raised appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Kaufman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. No point of order can arise on that matter.

Mr. Kaufman: It is a new point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am in no way seeking to challenge your decision, but wish to put a point to you. Prior to my application there was a statement by the Home Secretary on his decision relating to Tamils, which was not a voluntary statement, but arose from your decision to allow a private notice question, as advertised to the House on the Annunciators earlier today. Therefore, no confidences are involved. The Home Secretary never intended to make a statement. He did so only because you, in your wisdom and discretion, allowed a private notice question. Because of your decision, the House was able to question the Home Secretary.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has not volunteered a statement on the matter that I raised in my application under Standing Order No. 10. There are thousands of people whose personal situations are at stake and who have no idea of where they stand. Can you advise the House on how we are to obtain some explanation from the Government on how they intend to proceed as a result of the Strasbourg judgment?

Mr. Speaker: Order. What the right hon. Gentleman said may or may not be true, but I do not control statements that are made by the Government. That is entirely a matter for them. I am sure that the Home Secretary listened to what the right hon. Member said. With regard to opportunities for discussing this important matter, it is not for me to advise the right hon. Gentleman on tactics, but I suggest that it would perhaps be a good topic for an Opposition day.

Orders of the Day

Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: As the debate is starting fairly late, I appeal to hon. Members for brief contributions.

6.11 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Younger): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Before detailing the provisions of the Bill, it is important to set out something of the background. Events in this field have moved very quickly indeed in the past few months, and the Government have responded quickly and flexibly to meet exceptional circumstances by exceptional measures.

There are two main questions which have been asked over the past few weeks. First, why did we have to have a revaluation? In Scotland, the law clearly lays down that there should be regular revaluations every five years to ensure that properties continue to bear appropriate shares of the overall rating burden. No one has argued against that in principle. While we have a rating system, it is only just that the relative values on which the tax is levied should be kept in line with reality and reasonably up to date.

In August 1983 the Government confirmed in the White Paper on rating reform in Scotland, Cmnd. 9018, that there would be a full Scottish revaluation to take effect from April 1985. Again, that was approved by all parties and by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. Indeed, it would be fairly difficult for anyone to argue in favour of perpetuating indefinitely a set of old and increasingly out of date relative values. There was no further justification for postponement, and the time when the 1985 revaluation could have been postponed in an orderly manner came and went.

The second question with which I must deal is: why could special help not be given earlier and in one tranche instead of several?

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): There is a third question to which I hope that the Secretary of State will give an answer. Why was there a change in relationships between industrial ratepayers, commercial ratepayers and domestic ratepayers?

Mr. Younger: I shall come to that point. The hon. Gentleman is very perspicacious in these matters.

It was in the autumn of last year that the results of the assessors' work over the preceding months first began to become available. By the time of the rate support grant announcement on 7 December I had been made aware of the very substantial shift of rateable value away from manufacturing industry and towards domestic property. This was not, as some have suggested, an arbitrary or a political judgment of the assessors. It reflects the fact that over a period of seven years, in which there has been substantial economic change, the heritable assets of Scottish industry have not risen in value in the same proportion as the homes of the Scottish people. It was not

[Mr. Younger]

surprising, and the Government's reaction to it was to use both the instruments available to me to moderate the general effects of the shift.

In December, therefore, taking account of the benefits that revaluation would bring to this sector, I made an order adjusting the level of industrial derating down from 50 to 40 per cent., and at the same time announced that the level of domestic rate relief would be increased from the equivalent of a penny in the pound to 5p in the pound. Those decisions were taken on the basis of indications from the assessors of what the average effect of revaluation on the different sectors would be: that domestic subjects would lose, commerce would neither gain nor lose, and industry would by and large gain.

In mid-February the assessors were required by law to deliver the new valuation rolls to the local authorities for publication, and swiftly thereafter it became clear to us that there would be some very large increases involved for domestic ratepayers once the local authorities set their rate poundages. In the few weeks between the publication of the rolls and the last date for setting of rate poundages, we decided exceptionally to increase the domestic rate relief yet further, from 5p to 8p in the pound, at an extra cost of £38·5 million. This was announced early in March.

Up to this point, we had been concentrating on the effects of broad movements of rateable value in terms of the averages for the different sectors. It seemed that, with the action already taken, domestic, commercial and industrial ratepayers could now be expected to live with the results of the revaluation as we saw them in terms of those average sectoral figures. We must bear in mind that it is the precise purpose of having a revaluation to reflect changes in values both upwards and downwards. It never was the purpose to ensure that nobody had an increase and nobody had a reduction. That would merely perpetuate the unfairness which revaluation is designed to reduce.

However, by the time everyone had received his valuation notice and then his rate demand, it became very clear that, whatever the average might be, there were still very many ratepayers whose valuation increases were so steep as to lead to unacceptably large increases in their rate bills. Many of these were in the commercial sector where, as I have said, we were aware that the overall effect of the revaluation was neutral. It is, however, of little help to know that the average effect of something is neutral if its effect on one's own business is fatal.

During March and April the evidence built up that the sudden effect of the more extreme valuation changes that 1985 had brought would be damaging and unacceptable. The Government decided that a limit should be set. With the average revaluation multiplier for all property being 2·33 times, the limit was fixed at three times. We are in no doubt that there are many in Scotland who, even after the new rebates, will continue to face hefty rate increases this year, especially in areas where the local authorities have been less than responsible in their budgeting. The measure before the House today is not able to, nor is it intended to, bring down all high rate bills. It is, I repeat, an exceptional measure intended to tackle selectively the exceptional hardship which would be suffered by those individuals and businesses facing extrememly high increases in the rates that they would have to pay.

I now deal with the Bill itself and what is in it. It is deliberately short. It creates two new statutory duties. First, there is a duty on rating authorities to give rebates to those whose valuations have increased more than three times between the most up-to-date version of the "old" roll, which was valid on 31 March this year, and the new roll which came into force a day later. The essence of the Bill is that it applies to properties for which this comparison can be made. If the comparison is not possible, the property cannot benefit.

The exclusions—listed in clause 1(2)—are: properties which are already valued by a statutory formula approved by Parliament, properties which benefit from their valuations being already reduced by statutory derating, and local authorities' own properties.

Properties occupied by the Crown — hospitals, Government offices and the like — are technically not liable for local authority rates as such, and the Bill does not therefore need to exclude them. The usual procedure whereby the Treasury valuer arranges for payments in lieu of rates will operate, unaffected by the Bill.

The second new duty created by the Bill is laid upon me, to reimburse the rating authorities the amount of all the rebates that they pay. The amounts of such rebates granted to ratepayers, and liable for reimbursement by the Scottish Office, will not be relevant expenditure by the local authorities and will not count against their guidelines.

The Bill is an enabling measure. I intend immediately after its enactment to bring to this House an order which will contain all further necessary provisions for operating the scheme, including the ceiling of £10,000 on the rebate on any one property. This order is being discussed with COSLA, whose representatives have already made several useful contributions. In particular, they have argued that it would be preferable for the rating authorities in the first instance to calculate and grant rebates rather than for ratepayers to send in individual claims. Only if someone feels that he has been missed out will there be a claim procedure to fall back upon. I agree with COSLA that this would seem desirable. As well as making for more economical administration, it will be less trouble for qualifying ratepayers.

I might add that it would be helpful if ratepayers did not write to their assessor or rating authority about this scheme at present. The assessors have plenty to do, with the many appeals against valuations now being lodged, and the Scottish Office intends to make sure by giving suitable publicity to the fact that those who may qualify for the new rebate will not lose out through inadvertence. Meanwhile, if a ratepayer judges that, because he may qualify for rebate when the Bill is enacted, he will be better off not paying his 1985-86 rates by instalments, he may of course opt for that, but he then becomes liable to make a lump sum payment at the end of September of the whole of his year's rates, less any rebate which his authority should have calculated by then.

The Bill does not limit the laying of such an order to this year alone.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): I have one slight anxiety about the possible use of clause 1 in future years. My right hon. Friend may not wish to deal with the matter now and it could perhaps be dealt with in the reply to the debate. It is a technical point. The clause obliges rating authorities to grant rebate. I am not clear whether that provision could be used by a Secretary of State in

future to be selective about which rating authorities would be obliged to do so, or whether the provision would always apply to all rating authorities.

Mr. Younger: I take my hon. Friend's point. The important thing is that the Bill makes it possible in future years to lay an order which is similar, or slightly different if such should be deemed necessary. I am not sure—I shall make inquiries—whether, if the Bill were passed by the House, it would be in order for a future order to be selective in its application. I should have thought not, but I shall check and write to my hon. Friend, or my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) might be able to deal with it in replying to the debate.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Secretary of State referred to the number of appeals received by the assessors. Will he say something about the psychological effect that the Bill might have? People might not now be disposed to appeal, and that could have long-term consequences. It could mean that money was being paid out under an order which would be unnecessary if an appeal were allowed.

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman's main point is right. The point of appealing is not, principally, to alter the amount that a ratepayer pays this year. The object of appealing is to ensure that the basic valuation upon which the rate is based is correct and just. If ratepayers feel that their basic revaluations are too high or in some other ways defective, they should still appeal, irrespective of the aid to be provided this year under an order which I hope the House will approve later.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To follow up the point made by the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) about whether an order might discriminate between one authority and another, the Secretary of State must surely intend that all rating authorities as specified in the Bill — "Regional and Islands Councils" — will be treated equally. I hope that he will therefore make it clear that, however the wording of the Bill might be construed, he intends to treat all rating authorities equally with regard to rebate.

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. I shall check to ensure that this is correct, but the Bill discriminates between classes of ratepayer, not between authorities. I believe that that is the answer, but I shall ensure that it is correct. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will be able to let the House know about that.

Finally, I come to the figures in the explanatory and financial memorandum. There has been a good deal of public interest in the likely cost of the revaluation rebate scheme and I should therefore like to say a word or two about that. At the time, a few weeks ago, when evidence was coming in about the effects of certain steep valuation increases, and the Government were deciding that these were not acceptable, we did not have direct and confidential access to the data banks or the data handling facilities of the Scottish assessors, and had perforce to make estimates of the prevalence and the nature of such extreme valuations on the basis of quite a small sample. Nevertheless, once I had announced the threshold multiplier of three, the rating authorities were enabled to use their computers to begin calculations of rather more accurate figures by matching up the entries on the old and new roles. We have consulted the convention, and the figures that it has given us are not yet complete.

While it looks as if the total cost should indeed be contained within the £50 million figure attached to the Bill, and may be a bit less, it is not possible yet to be sure what it will amount to, and not at all certain that the lower estimate of £30 million which has been mentioned in the press would be enough to cover all the rebates.

Whatever the outturn figure, the Government take the view that it is surely right in principle that ratepayers in Scotland should not suffer through sudden and unexpected changes in the tax base raising their valuations to levels greater than three times last year's. That is, and always was, the purpose of the scheme that we are debating today.

While there will be a number of details in the Bill which hon. Members will wish to question and scrutinise today, I am grateful to the Opposition for their undertaking to facilitate the passage of the Bill through the House.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): As we are rushing this measure through, why does the Bill provide that it only comes into effect two months after the Royal Assent?

Mr. Younger: That seems to be the normal procedure. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, there are procedures to be followed between Royal Assent and the coming into effect of the Act. I do not believe that that will cause any great difficulty, but if the right hon. Gentleman feels that it will I should be glad to hear any points that he would like to make. He may have a sensible point to make.

As I said, I am grateful to the Opposition——

Mr. Millan: In other words, the Secretary of State does not know the answer to my question. Could he perhaps answer another question? When will we have the statutory instrument?

Mr. Younger: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware from having read the Bill that various things have to be done between those two points. For instance, there has to be an Order in Council. That is bound to take some time. If the right hon. Gentleman had been listening, he would have heard me say that I would bring in the order as soon as I could after the Bill had been passed by the House. I hope that he will feel that that is satisfactory.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is the Secretary of State aware that if the Bill comes into effect two months after the Royal Assent, and the order cannot be laid until the Bill comes into effect, that will take us into the middle of the summer recess? Surely he will not introduce such an order during the summer recess. As I understand it, the Bill requires an affirmative order, and that could not possibly come in until about October or November.

Mr. Younger *rose*——

Mr. Millan: The Secretary of State mentioned an Order in Council. Where is there a provision in the Bill for an Order in Council?

Mr. Younger: It is a statutory instrument that must be produced. I am sorry if I misled the right hon. Gentleman.

As there is plainly some anxiety about this matter, I shall lay out a clear schedule of the likely timing. I understand that this measure is generally supported, and I hope that with the agreement of the House we can get the legislation through reasonably quickly. There will then be

[Mr. Younger]

no delay in putting forward the necessary further procedures so that local authorities, assessors, and ratepayers can be in no doubt of their position. I hope that that is helpful.

It will be welcome to ratepayers in Scotland to see that their real concerns are being acted upon generously and decisively by the Government, and that Parliament can act quickly and with general agreement when there is a clear need to do so.

6.30 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Monday is not the best of days for the Second Reading of a Scottish Bill but I do not think that there will be too many complaints from Conservative Members. One feature of Scottish politics is that the Conservative party, which used to campaign with some elan and enthusiasm on rating, now finds the issue a deeply embarrassing one. It was clear that the Secretary of State did not have his heart in the job this afternoon. His arguments were cursory and simplistic.

The Bill provides a measure of relief for the hard-pressed Scottish ratepayer and that is why we are allowing it to go through on an expedited timetable. I was surprised when the right hon. Gentleman explained to my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) that a delay of two months is normal. We are using abnormal procedures to expedite the Bill's passage and to help the Government and for the right hon. Gentleman to plead that it is normal to have delay against that background is remarkably irrelevant.

If the Bill is to give anything to the ratepayer in Scotland, we shall give it a helping hand. However, the measure has been born out of a great deal of indecision and confusion. It is the product of a good deal of disordered panic in the Scottish Office, which over the past few months has become the mark of this Administration.

The Secretary of State took us through the history of the Bill. He seemed to suggest that there was almost a master plan. He implied that the necessity for the Bill had been seen months ago. It is usually the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram), the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who comes up with that sort of earnest alibi, which he utters implausibly. The Secretary of State has rather disappeared from the Scottish political scene of late. However, both the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Gentleman agree that the provisions in the Bill were all foreseen. That alibi is implausible. First, the domestic element was set at 5p. The Government admittedly produced £19 million and £31 million had to be produced by local authorities. The £31 million was clawed from the already reduced services provided by the authorities. The Government's attitude at that time was "Not a penny more".

The heat came on and suddenly and mysteriously £38·5 million was added to the domestic element. That sum was ripped out of the Scottish Office budget. Again the Government said, "Not a penny more". However, another £50 million has been found to save the Secretary of State from the wrath of his own supporters. The week at Perth must have been one of the most expensive weeks for the country and the Treasury for a long time. However, the result appeared to offer some help and much needed relief for the Scottish ratepayer. I suppose that we were all supposed to go home happy at the end of that little performance.

We have seen Ministers being driven from pillar to post. They thought at each step that they would get away with it but at each step the public's wrath mounted and each time Ministers had to produce something else because they had it lamentably and politically wrong. Once a Government lose control—there is a lack of confidence and grip in the Scottish Office—it is extremely difficult to re-establish any form of authority.

Mr. Younger: Who wrote that?

Mr. Dewar: I did and I am proud of it. I think that it has the ring of truth for most people in Scotland, who are not impressed by what has been happening in the Scottish Office. For a long time the press machine of the Scottish Office was telling us that the Secretary of State had earned a glittering prize and that he had done so well that he should be promoted. However, his friends, with endless ingenuity, are now saying that the right hon. Gentleman must be moved because he is a liability. At least that has a kernel of hope for most of us.

As I have said, any help for the Scottish ratepayer is welcome but the help which the Government are providing is on the margin. There is no doubt that the scheme that the Secretary of State has introduced will result in many inequalities. There will be rough justice and much discontent when it is seen in operation.

I accept that the scheme is based upon rateable values and is designed to take the peaks out of the effect of revaluation, but the public think very much of what they have to pay at the end of the day. It is no doubt well known to the Secretary of State that some domestic properties which had a rateable value of £300 have had that valuation increased to £900. The threshold in Glasgow will be 39 per cent. and in Aberdeen it will be 19 per cent. A similar picture emerges for commercial property. An increase of 53 per cent. in Glasgow will not qualify for relief but in Aberdeen relief will be triggered by an increase of 37 per cent. I recognise that there may be a logic in the Government's argument but it turns on rateable value and has nothing to do with what people pay at the end of the day. It is the effect of the Bill that the public will judge. The examples that I have given can be extended to other areas, including Tweeddale. There will be problems and the right hon. Gentleman should address himself to them.

The Secretary of State has a better case on the commercial side than on the domestic. I reckon—I have been helped by COSLA—that the concessions in the Bill will amount to about 4 per cent. of the total bill for the commercial sector. There will not be a great deal of gratitude from anyone for that because many people will still face substantial increases. However, I accept that there is something of consequence in the Bill.

I understand that slightly more than 50,000 commercial properties will benefit following the Bill's enactment. That sounds pretty impressive but it must be put into perspective. I have no doubt that the Minister has been giving some thought to what has been happening. In Tayside, for example, about 12,700 commercial properties will benefit from this form of rate relief. That is the good news. The not so good news is that 8,000 of those properties are lock-up garages. Does that suggest to the right hon. Gentleman as it does to me that the scheme

has produced an unintended consequence, or is it a piece of careful Conservative planning? If that example is projected throughout Scotland—I do not suppose that there is anything particularly unusual about Tayside—a picture emerges that is different from the one that might be expected.

The concession for the domestic ratepayer is extremely thin. There will be marginal assistance for a few but there will be nowt for the vast majority. There is an air of unreality about many of the arguments that have been advanced. For example, there was a pompous announcement by the Scotish Office in the text of a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen). The impression was given that the Government were introducing an important concession by means of the £10,000 cut-off on individual properties in the domestic sector. Is there a property in Scotland that will benefit from that cut-off? If there is—perhaps the right hon. Gentleman is more expert than I am on stately homes—I have no doubt that we shall be told when the Under-Secretary of State replies. Perhaps there is a marquis or duke somewhere who will benefit from the concession. Who knows, there may be a more humble chatelaine who is saying his prayers and counting his blessings.

Mr. Younger: Surely the fault lay in the form of the question, or is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the question should not have been answered?

Mr. Dewar: We have said consistently to the right hon. Gentleman that he might want to consider a cut-off, but we did not consider a cut-off of £10,000. Surely that concession has the air of a make-believe figure. There is little in the Government's concession for the owner-occupier at the bottom end of the market. I suspect that there is even less for the council house tenant.

There are houses in the Garscadden constituency that will benefit from the Government's scheme. There are some that will enjoy an advantage but not very many. I have taken some examples of houses in Knightswood. I do not claim that it is an enormously rich and sensitive sample but it is one that produces some interesting facts. It is a scatter of individual examples of rateable values that have increased by a factor of more than three. The greatest saving will be 6·6 per cent. on the new rates bill. The smallest saving in my constituency is 0·5 per cent. in the sample that I have considered. The greatest cash reduction will be £31·71 on a bill of £591. However, I have considered only a handful of properties and the majority of my constituents will get not a penny piece. The bleak reality is that many will face increases in their rate bills of 30 per cent. or 40 per cent. and will receive no help from the changes that are being introduced.

Mr. Younger: I am sorry to keep interrupting. The hon. Gentleman is an advocate of revaluation and, indeed, supported and pressed for it. What does he suggest should happen? He says that the Government are giving help to people with exceptionally high increases, and he supports revaluation, so what does he want?

Mr. Dewar: I shall come to that, and the right hon. Gentleman will no doubt await my reply with interest.

I am establishing the simple point that large numbers of people who rightly feel hard pressed by the increases in their rates bills will not be assisted. We shall wish to ask many questions in Committee on Wednesday. I was delighted to notice in the *Daily Express* of 30 May, for example, a direct quote from the Secretary of State, which stated

> "Mr. Younger admitted that the figures for the original calculations were hurriedly produced.
>
> 'They were necessarily speculative,' he said. 'But the whole matter will be thrashed out in Parliament next week.'"

I look forward to the exciting Wednesday that we shall have. Today, I shall give the right hon. Gentleman a taste of some of the points that we shall raise on Wednesday, and which will be the subject of specific amendments.

The first relates to the take-up. I recognise that there is an element of error and that there may be some minor changes. I have examined the figures from COSLA, which were produced by running the new and old rules through all the major rating areas to extract the properties that are eligible for benefit. COSLA is confident that the pay-out will be, not £50 million, but £29·5 million or near to it. It will not do for the Secretary of State to say in a lordly way that the figure may be less than £50 million. Any reasonable calculation shows that it will be a hell of a lot less.

It is remarkable that COSLA was consulted about this rickety scheme for the first time only last week. A shortfall of £20 million is unacceptable. The Secretary of State is trying to buy peace, and if he does that he must pay the price for it. If £50 million is to be shaken from the piggy bank of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it should be spent as was advertised at Perth. We shall want assurances that that money will be devoted to relieving the pressure on Scottish ratepayers.

I accept that there may be difficulties in simplistically dropping the multiplier, because if we reduce it by even a small amount we include an enormous slice of the total properties in any one sector. However, we shall certainly table an amendment to give the power to include other classes of ratepayer, and to vary the present rules. If that is impracticable, the right hon. Gentleman may consider whether he should put a further 1½p on the domestic element, which would benefit every domestic ratepayer, and which would be covered by a figure short of £20 million, which it appears will become available.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Has my hon. Friend seen the Glasgow *Evening Times* of 29 May, which states that the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) threw his weight behind the campaign to ensure that the full £50 million is taken up? Is he encouraged by that?

Mr. Dewar: I do not know how much weight there is there. The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) has always struck me as being a slight figure in every sense of the word. I certainly welcome his help, for what it is worth. To be fair to the hon. Gentleman, he is right to say that it would be unacceptable to hon. Members if £20 million were returned to the Treasury as some sort of baksheesh for the mandarins there. It should be used for Scottish ratepayers, and on Wednesday we shall want the Secretary of State to deal with that issue.

Secondly, there is the question of the future of the assistance during the latter part of the quinquennium. Obviously, this is a rescue package designed for 1985-86, but what will happen in the second, third, fourth and fifth years when the revaluation is in operation? The right hon. Gentleman is a reluctant Samaritan in the first year, and there will be a great deal of disappointment and anger if

[Mr. Dewar]

he allows the victim to be sandbagged in the second year and leaves everyone to meet the full impact of revaluation. It is important that we move away from the present provisions which permit the continuation of the system in the latter part of the quinquennium, and that we receive guarantees from the Secretary of State.

I do not like raising unpleasant subjects, but recently there was an unpleasant incident in Scotland when the Chancellor of the Exchequer visited Perth. The *Glasgow Herald* of 11 May quoted the Chancellor as saying that

"he . . . had bailed out Mr. George Younger . . . in his crisis with . . . 'exceptional extra funds'."

The Guardian of 11 May stated that the Chancellor said:

"'No more money is likely for Scotland next year. I don't think he (Mr. Younger) will find me in the same compassionate, open-handed and generous mood next time'."

From that, it appears that we must help the Secretary of State in his fight against the Chancellor over what will happen in future years. I hope that Conservative Back Bench Members will support us in that fight. I cannot think of anything that would put their marginal seats in more jeopardy than, having mounted the rescue bid for the coming financial year, abandoning it in future. They should join us in tabling amendments, which will buttress the Secretary of State's efforts by placing on him a statutory duty to continue this system at some level during the remaining years. That would help the right hon. Gentleman greatly in his fight against the Chancellor. I genuinely hope that there will be all-party support for the amendments, and that Conservative Members will join us in the Lobby on Wednesday.

The third question relates to administrative expenses. The financial memorandum suggests that they will amount to £1 million. I do not know whether that is accurate, but the figure will be substantial. It will be necessary to identify the people who will be entitled to some form of rebate. In many cases it will be necessary to call in and adjust or issue new payment books for those who pay on a 10-instalment basis. Despite the strictures of the Secretary of State, there will be a great volume of work dealing with inquiries from disappointed and enraged people, who find that they are entitled to nothing. As the Secretary of State said, at least by implication, there will inevitably be a considerable delay in collecting rating revenue compared with a normal year, and, as a result, interest charges for local authorities will rise.

By operating the formula we have the power to reimburse the money given to the ratepayers. Perhaps the Secretary of State will tell us when that reimbursement will take place. It will not be satisfactory if local authorities must wait until the start of the next financial year. I hammer the point that there is power to reimburse, but no power to reimburse the expenses which, according to the explanatory memorandum, will fall entirely on local authorities. I am grateful to the Secretary of State for what I believe to be an assurance—I shall read what he said—that we shall not be in the black farce in which that will be counted against guidelines, and prayed in aid in evidence of excessive and unreasonable expenditure. We want a guarantee. It would be perfectly fair for administrative expenses to be refunded to local authorities. They should not be asked to foot the bill for the Secretary of State's incompetence.

We would normally discuss at length an enormous number of further points. I am glad that the Secretary of State has shifted his ground regarding whether there should be individual applications or whether the onus should be on local authorities. In his statement of 14 May he made it clear that he was thinking in terms of individual applications. I welcome the fact that he has written to COSLA on that point.

At present there is no appeal mechanism in the Bill, and presumably anyone with a grievance will have to go to judicial review, which means to the Court of Session. I suspect that effectively there can be no appeal. The right hon. Gentleman should also consider that point.

The whole thing is shot through with anomalies which will cause difficulties. The amount of money, while not very large, will cause irritation. For example, it will be somewhat anomalous if someone buys a house half way through the year without paying the rateable value in the previous year. In a row of houses under completion, there could well be cases—I can think of some in Glasgow—where one of them will have been occupied in time to get on to last year's roll and will qualify for assistance, while others with identical rateable values on the new roll will not qualify. That is bound to cause problems.

Difficulties could also arise over disabled persons' rating relief. If there is a variation in the discount on the rates payable during the previous year, it could well be that the payment has gone up by more than a factor of three whereas the rateable value has not. In such circumstances, will a person qualify for this relief? An enormous number of detailed points such as those can arise, and I have no doubt that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary will do his best to deal with them.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he envisages a situation in which the revaluation goes up by less than three times while the rate of payment increases by more than three times?

Mr. Dewar: Yes, because of a change in the special discount allowed to disabled persons. I have quoted cases where that could happen. I concede that it is a marginal problem, but it could arise. I instance that as an example of the rough justice that could result from the Bill.

Many of my hon. Friends will want to take up general points during the debate, but I am sure that I speak for all of them when I say that we take very little satisfaction from what, on the whole, has been a sad and sorry tale. The whole thing began with the revaluation saga, and the Secretary of State is never blate in suggesting that I pressed for the revaluation to go ahead. Initially, revaluation was on; then it was partially on; then it was off. Ultimately, it proceeded with the maximum of confusion.

I certainly agree that there must be revaluation in a rating system, otherwise anomalies will grow. But we cannot have a rating system or revaluation when that is combined with ruthless and relentless cumulative cuts in the rate of central Government support—where there is a determined effort, as there has been over recent years, to shift the burden from the Treasury to the individual ratepayer.

The figure that we have used again and again is central to the argument. COSLA has calculated that had the percentage of rate support grant been held at its 1980-81 level in the intervening years since then, local authorities would have had another £1,000 million of central Government support. Revaluation has been the final

insult. It has certainly been a tremendous blow to individual householders. But the real problem and complaint is that the amount of money to be paid has been rising, directly reflecting the policy of the Secretary of State. In that sense, he has been his own executioner.

Ministers have been ambushed, and realise that they are in mortal danger. That is why we have had a rout and scramble for safety over the last few months. Indeed, the difference a few weeks makes is extraordinary. On 5 March, in an article in *The Scotsman*, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South, said:

"we had to accept that the routes"—

to rating reform—

"which had been examined were unacceptable and that for the time being we would have to continue with the rating system".

He was asked specifically if he favoured changes in the rating system and whether he ruled them out. He replied:

"I do not think you can rule out anything for ever".

Three weeks later his political master was sounding a retreat, and the hon. Gentleman was duly spinning on his heels and heading in exactly the opposite direction.

It is worth remembering the reason why that was done. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman was engagingly frank about the matter. He said:

"We have had one go at trying to reform rates and everyone was against the alternatives. This time we have to deliver. Not acting at all means there will be severe political consequences".

That was the great pilot's statement of principle. The Minister knew that the political ground under his feet was shifting and that he had to scramble to save not only his seat but those of his hon. Friends. We are now committed to we know not what. All we know is that a manifesto pledge will not be enough. We know from the right hon. Gentleman's speech at the Tory party conference that there will be a scheme by the end of this year, but I suspect that when that pledge was given Conservative Members, including the Secretary of State, did not have a clue about what they would do or how they would do it.

Mr. Ancram: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will use this opportunity to answer a question that I put to him previously. Does he and his party favour finding an alternative to the rating system, and, if so, will he clearly say so?

Mr. Dewar: I am happy to state our position. We will look very hard at the alternatives — *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members laugh at responsibility. I suppose that they must, because they are strangers to it. I believe that there is a very strong case for local income tax because it meshes with our plans for a Scottish Assembly and the financing of it. We shall look carefully at that. However, we shall not go in for some hastily cobbled together solution based on expediency and political opportunism and, I suspect, a strong dash of fear, and which will not provide any real basis on which local democracy can flourish.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan) *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: No, I shall not give way.

We want to see a sensible reform of the system, but we shall not adopt the silly course of promising something without knowing exactly what it should be. That has been a mark of recent months. We at least shall try to keep in touch with reality, responsiblity and our duty to local democracy and the system in Scotland.

The responsibility for the present problems lies squarely with the Secretary of State. The disarray and distress behind him is a mark of that. A few moments ago the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) said that as a result of present incompetence in the Scottish Office she predicted that only four Scottish Conservative Members of Parliament would be left after the next election. The hurried and ill-prepared scheme which is now being talked about will reflect that calculation rather than any real basis of principle. This is all too obviously a deathbed repentance on the part of the Secretary of Sate, and deathbed repentances are seldom convincing. He and his hapless friends will not be saved, because he has not brought forward the kind of relief for the hard pressed ratepayers of Scotland that the crisis demands.

6.58 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): I am glad that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that he welcomed the Bill. He said that any help is welcome, and this measure will be very welcome to the large number of my constituents who are affected. The hon. Gentleman also referred to years two, three and four. The reform of the rating system may have gone through well within that time scale, and I for one very much hope that it has.

I welcome the Bill and regard it very much as a stage in the continuing process. After all, the Secretary of State increased to £88 million the domestic element of the rate support grant. That means relief of £40 on a value of £500, and more on higher values. I take as just one example shopkeepers in my own constituency. One lady selling clothes found that the rateable value of her shop went up from £650 to £2,800. A great many like her will benefit from the Bill. It is encouraging that relief will be at least 100 per cent. in respect of that part of the rates bill relating to total valuation that is more than three times the revaluation for this year.

The upper limit on total relief will relate to the property concerned to allow maximum help both for successful small businesses and for businesses in general throughout Scotland. That will be important to many people. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will do everything within his power to identify those concerned as soon as possible so as to make it certain that those who are entitled to claim are aware of their rights.

This morning I received a letter from the National Federation of the Self-Employed and Small Businesses, which raises a question about appeals that has already been touched on by the hon. Member for Garscadden. It says:

"We also urge you to ensure that this relief will not act as a disincentive to the ratepayer exercising his right to appeal".

I ask my hon. Friend to look at this matter bearing in mind expenses. For most appeals, costs are probably minimal. They start off with a letter, which the assessor may accept. In one case in my constituency, where a railway stop has just been established, the assessor has automatically accepted the appeal at no more expense to the appellant than a postage stamp. However, if appeals mean substantial expenses and having to go through a long detailed court case, it might become counter-productive for the person to go ahead with the appeal. I hope that, before the Bill is finally passed, some guidance will be given.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

The federation has said that in one case an assessor increased the rate from £1,100 to £13,000. This means that rate relief can be claimed on £9,700 and as local rate poundage is 70p, relief will be £6,790. On the federation's advice, the person concerned was appealing, but in that case the assessor had already offered to reduce the valuation from £13,000 to £5,000.

The assessor may act reasonably in most cases, but I can give an example of him acting unreasonably. When Edinburgh airport established a new runway, the assessor refused to accept that there should be any difference in rateable value, although the new runway was pointing straight at the citizens concerned. They had to go through an expensive case, at the end of which the rateable value on their properties was reduced.

Mr. McQuarrie: My hon. Friend has quoted an example of an assessor in Edinburgh reducing an assessment from £13,000 to £5,000—a cut of £8,000. Does my hon. Friend accept that this answers the case that we have been endeavouring to put forward, that assessors have merely been taking figures out of their heads and applying them to anybody's household, to such an extent that the increases are unacceptable to most people?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I cannot tell my hon. Friend about the exact circumstances as the case was put to me by the National Federation of the Self-Employed and Small Businesses. However, I think that in most cases the assessors tried to act professionally, although in some cases they were way out. I invite my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to give some guidance about appeals if there is any danger that substantial expenses may be involved.

When the statement about this Bill was originally made, I flew straight up to attend a large meeting of ratepayers at which one of the assessors was speaking. He said that what we would be doing today represented a distortion of the system, and in a sense it is. However, that serves only to underline the need to reform the rating system generally. I was glad to see that, as part of the transitional arrangements, clause 1(6) makes it clear that the Secretary of State will be enabled to continue these arrangements next year, should the necessity arise. By then we shall know a great deal more about how successful in giving assistance this has been. We may need to modify the scheme depending on the representations that we have received from interested parties.

Recently, I tried to discover the difference in rateable value between properties north and south of the border. A few days ago, I received an interesting reply from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. She said:

"It is in the nature of a system based on evidence of local rental values that the valuation of similar buildings will vary both within a locality and from one area of the country to another. The detailed legal basis for the valuation differs in Scotland and more importantly Scottish figures are now shown at the levels of 1985-86 revaluation while those for England and Wales are set in relation to the 1973-74 revaluation."

The significant part of the letter says:

"On the domestic side, it may be reasonable to look at the average rate bill for a domestic property. The Scottish figure including the domestic water rate is £397 in the current year as against around £430 in England when water charges are included. Even with these figures there is the difficulty that the mix of properties may not be comparable as between houses and flats, urban and rural property, owner-occupied and local authority owned housing."

As there are far more local authority houses in Scotland, it is difficult to get a comparison, but I can say with certainty that in Edinburgh the rateable values for commercial, industrial and domestic properties have increased far more than in East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian.

Mr. Robert Hughes: What about Aberdeen?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall look up the facts and try to answer the hon. Gentleman's question. The same may apply in the countryside outside Aberdeen.

John Lewis, the large department store in Edinburgh, has compared the rates that it has to pay with the rates that John Lewis in Oxford street, London has to pay. It says that the rates paid per square foot in Edinburgh are 20 per cent. higher than those in Oxford street. The store fears that it may soon have to pay twice as much in Edinburgh as it does in Oxford street. In a letter to me, the managing director says:

"I need scarcely point out that Oxford Street is perhaps the finest trading pitch in the world and that our branch there enjoys an island site with extensive frontages at shopping level, whereas in Edinburgh we are in an essentially secondary location with no exposure to the principal shopping thoroughfare."

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary is bound to take into account the overspending of Edinburgh district council, which is 48·3 per cent. above the guidelines, which would increase the district rate by 79 per cent. I made inquiries as to what it had been spending on. More than £100,000 worth had been spent on propaganda.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Might not the trouble be with the original assessor? The hon. Gentleman will no doubt have received, as most of us have, a letter from the Football Association in Scotland, with a copy of an article by the chairman of the Celtic football club. In it, he claims that his club paid more in rates in one year than a leading English club paid in 25 years. Are not the assessors to blame for the enormous discrepancies rather than local councils?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That may be so in certain cases and I am making inquiries into that case. However, in the case of John Lewis in Edinburgh, the rise in rates has had much to do with the expenditure by the council.

I can give examples of the £100,000 that has been spent on propaganda. More than £10,000 was spent on a full page advertisement in the Edinburgh *Evening News*. Some £3,900 was spent on hand-painted banners and some £1,300 on the erection of the banners. One poster says, "Support Democracy". We all support democracy, but it is not necessary for us to spend more than £1,000 in doing so. Producing art work for posters cost £3,873, 48 sheet posters cost £4,810 and so on.

When the interests of those involved in the local economy are at stake I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will take such expenditure into account because selective action may become a necessity if the local economy is to survive. The director-general of the Retail Consortium spoke about the Bill in a letter that arrived today.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): What percentage of loss to the local economy will be caused by hand-painted banners, and what percentage will be caused by the proposals made by the Secretary of State for Social Services? Are not other, related matters involved?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I do not think that there is any connection between the two. If there is overspending of £100,000 on propaganda, that is not what the ratepayers want. There has also been £150,000 spent on a new women's committee. If one scrutinises the accounts carefully, which I have no doubt we shall do in a future debate, the position will become clearer, but I think that it is a pity that we should have to go over the same course as that followed by Lothian regional council a few years ago.

Mr. Henderson: If the Labour party wants to indulge in propaganda, that is entirely legitimate in a democracy provided that it pays for it itself and does not expect the ratepayers to pay for it. For example, if Fife regional council wants to support striking miners, which bring disaster to the Fife economy, Labour party members should use their own money and not expect ratepayers to foot the bill.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree with my hon. Friend. The significance of this is felt by many shopkeepers, who will not benefit from this measure. For those who are affected by overspending of the sort that we have seen in Edinburgh, it must be taken into account.

However, a much more fundamental issue is the reform of the rating system, and I am glad that a review has been set up to find a fairer scheme than the existing rating system and a fairer and clearer way of distributing rate support grant. At the Perth conference, the Prime Minister said:

"We have reached the stage where no amount of patching up the existing system can overcome its inherent unfairness."

There is a vital need to reform the system. In fact the director-general of the Retail Consortium said that there requires to be "a change of attitude by local and national governments, away from rates being regarded as a tax on the occupation of property to that of a reasonable payment for the value of services actually received and equitably allocated." I hope that the reform of the system will take place within the lifetime of this Parliament, finally and irrevocably in the interests of fairness and justice.

7.12 pm

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), I give a cautious welcome to the Bill. I put it no higher than saying that I am not opposed to it. It is born of the statement by the Secretary of State at his own party conference in Perth, although later he made a statement about it here as well. It reminded me of a Budget statement. I have listened to a great many Budget statements. They always seem good when they are first heard. But, after two or three weeks' reflection, doubts begin to emerge. That is my view of the Bill and of the statement by the Secretary of State at his party conference.

At first glance, it seemed that a great many people would be assisted and that all would be helpful. But now we begin to wonder about the extent to which the average commercial and domestic ratepayer will be assisted and, more to the point, which of our domestic and commercial ratepayers it will help. That does not come through clearly to me either in the Bill or in the speech of the Secretary of State today.

My third worry arises very much from what the Secretary of State said in his 16-minute speech because, only a few weeks ago, I was chided by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for saying that I thought that the Government's proposal had been hastily conceived. I was extremely worried when the Secretary of State said that even now he did not have all the information from the various assessors, computers and all the paraphernalia available to him. That proved what many of us had been thinking—that the Secretary of State only a few days before his party conference plucked a figure and a formula out of the air. It was all far too hastily conceived, and that does not make for very good government.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden and the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst), I hope that this £50 million will be spent fairly and squarely on domestic and commercial ratepayers. However, what is sometimes fogotten by many right hon. and hon. Members is that the £50 million will come not out of some fairy grotto beneath New St. Andrew's house, but out of taxpayers' pockets, and the taxpayers are entitled to a better report from the Secretary of State than they had in his 16-minute speech about how the Government's proposal will be administered. Certainly before I give the Bill unqualified approval, I want to hear a great deal more about how the money will be spent, because taxpayers are entitled to more information about it.

My main concern is with the domestic ratepayer. I have spoken to dozens of my constituents and, as yet, I have not found one who will benefit from this proposal. Not one will meet the requirement specifying a threefold increase in the valuation of his property. Most of them come very near three times—2·7, 2·8, 2·9—but not three times. That means that they will not benefit in the way that many of them had hoped. I must stress that these are not crummy houses. They are houses in the Burnside or Kirkhill areas of my constituency which the hon. Member for Moray (Mr. Pollock) knows well. They will not benefit, so I wonder who will benefit.

The people who give me great cause for concern are the young people who have been encouraged by this Government and others to buy their homes. They have bought three-roomed and four-roomed houses taking on huge mortgages, and they are now working on very tight budgets. Their valuations have been increased, but nothing like three times. They will still be asked to pay a great deal more in rates, and that will be very difficult for many of these young people. They are the people who concern me most of all because they will not get one penny piece.

Many of us want to hear from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State who among the domestic ratepayers will benefit in any way. Apparently only those with large and comfortable houses will benefit. We did not hear a great deal from the Secretary of State about that. However, we are sure that the people who will be paying the extra money in the form of tax to raise this additional £50 million are those young people who are buying their homes on huge mortgages. It is they who will be asked to pay extra tax to help those who are a great deal better off than they are. That does not seem to be right. These young people are being asked to subsidise those who are better off than they are.

I shall not say much about the commercial sector, but I hope that in the weeks ahead the position will be made much clearer. From the correspondence that hon. Members have received from the National Federation of the Self-Employed and Small Businesses and the Retail Consortium it is clear that commercial ratepayers

[Mr. Gregor MacKenzie]

themselves are not sure how their problems will be sorted out. The Secretary of State was kind enough to concede some months ago that the problem was being dealt with in a piecemeal fashion, which cannot be good for the rating system in Scotland. It appears to many people that the rating system is turning into a shambles.

We do not know what will happen in the years ahead. Even the Secretary of State does not know. It appears that the only person who knows is the Chancellor of the Exchequer, judging by his comments at the Perth conference. However, most of us want to take a fundamental look at the rating system. Legislation such as this will not help Scottish ratepayers for ever more. We must examine the system fundamentally. I hope that the Government will iron out the anomalies in the systems in England and Scotland as Scottish people feel that they are being penalised. I should like there to be just one system for the whole of the United Kingdom. The Secretary of State has time to work something out with his Cabinet colleagues. I hope that they will come up with something better than this piecemeal approach.

We were told recently at Question Time that the Government are considering how to raise local government money, whether by income tax or some form of poll tax, which would be reprehensible. I hope that the matter will be given much more thought than has been put into the Bill. I do not favour change for the sake of change. There are deficiencies in the present system, but it is better than some of the hare-brained notions that have been put about recently. I am merely asking the Secretary of State to give the matter a good deal of thought and to devise a sensible system which applies to the whole of the United Kingdom and is fair to the ratepayers of Scotland.

7.21 pm

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me sufficiently early to enable me to host a dinner downstairs on behalf of a colleague who is not here today. I therefore apologise to the Front Benches and to the House if I am absent during the winding-up speeches.

We were led to believe that the Opposition would give this welcome measure constructive support. The support given by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was somewhat half-hearted. The Opposition's new found enthusiasm for the cause of ratepayers seems a little synthetic when we consider what the hon. Gentleman's comrades are doing in Edinburgh and Stirling. Unlike him, I have no hesitation in welcoming this measure to help those who are worst affected by revaluation.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his success in getting money from the Treasury to provide relief. That success should be contrasted with his reception when he announced additional rate relief. The Opposition could only crib that it was a reallocation of the Scottish Office budget.

I am pleased that it has been possible to assist commercial and domestic ratepayers who were hardest hit by revaluation. It is preferable that domestic ratepayers be helped selectively as indiscriminate rate relief would not target relief on those whose rates bills are highest. I hope that my right hon. Friend will continue to take a firm line on local government spending. I have heard some councillors, who are not of my persuasion, suggesting that this is a safety net under ratepayers with the highest valuations and that they can continue to spend without conscience.

I spoke to the finance director of Strathclyde regional council last week to discover how many of my constituents will benefit as a result of the Bill. I am grateful to Mr. Paterson and his staff for digging out the information for me. In Bearsden, 421 commercial ratepayers, or nearly 30 per cent., will benefit. In Strathkelvin, 658 commercial ratepayers, or 27 per cent., will benefit. Those are the highest percentages in Strathclyde region, and they confirm that rateable values in my constituency are excessively high. I hope that ratepayers will avail themselves of their right of appeal to get justice.

The story is rather different for domestic ratepayers, 243—1·71 per cent.—of whom in Bearsden will benefit and 979—3·3 per cent.—of whom in Strathkelvin will benefit. I see that 36,000, or 12 per cent., of ratepayers in Glasgow will benefit. It is not fair for the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) to tell the House that he knows nobody who will benefit. I cannot believe that some of those 36,000 people do not live in his constituency. I am sure that 12 per cent. of my constituents will be pleased to qualify.

Strathclyde regional council has advised me that £14·6 million will be available. I appreciate that my right hon. Friend is unable to announce the bill for Scotland, and I understand his difficulty in putting the scheme forward on the basis of insubstantial information. I am nevertheless glad that he was prepared to push for the scheme. However, it seems that there will be a shortfall which may be significant. I appreciate that eligibility should be set down in the Bill, but is the revaluation of three immutable? Could some other figure, which used up the money, be applied?

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): That is not what the hon. Gentleman said last week.

Mr. Hirst: I stand by what I said to the *Evening Times* last week when I was asked for an instant reaction to the news. I have no fear about saying one thing in Scotland and quite another here. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on persuading the Treasury to come up with an extra £50 million.

Mr. Norman Hogg: The hon. Gentleman said that at the beginning.

Mr. Hirst: It is worth repeating. I hope that it will be possible to ensure that the majority of the money is spent.

I am glad that the Bill provides for the scheme to be continued. Although it is unrealistic to expect my right hon. Friend to give commitments about spending in the future, he will have the undivided support of this side of the House if he can continue this form of relief until a replacement for rates is found. I am sure that my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench know that the burden that this year seems to be so intolerable to those who will qualify under the scheme will not be lightened next year.

There is one point upon which I should be grateful for clarification. I recognise the benefits of a simple Bill. I recognise also that certain categories will be exempted. However, I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland could deal with the position of the quarrying industry. I understand that quarrying is treated like any other normal industry.

However, certain quarries have experienced an enormous increase in their valuations. I understand that quarries qualify for industrial derating, but, in view of the references which have been made to legislation, I should be grateful if my hon. Friend could let me know whether the quarrying industry will qualify for relief.

Mr. Norman Hogg: I strongly support the request of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst). In my constituency, the rateable value of a quarry will rise 2·9 times—2·9 being a very significant figure — from £27,000 to £77,400. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will answer the point made by his hon. Friend.

Mr. Hirst: One of the interesting aspects when legislation comes before the House is that letters are sent to Members of Parliament. I expect that all Members have been bombarded with letters about the Bill from the Retail Consortium and the National Federation of the Self-Employed and Small Businesses, which, incidentally, were asking for a much smaller sum than is now on offer. One of the benefits of such letters is the constant reference by the retail sector to the damage that high rates do to businesses.

During the past week I have spoken to a number of small business men, one of whom recently opened a second shop which is facing a rates increase of 96 per cent. That man will benefit from the legislation, and he is very pleased about that, but he will still be faced with a significant increase in his overheads. His comment to me was, "Well, Michael, we hoped to take on a school leaver this year, train her in the business and provide a job for another person. Unfortunately, because of the rates increase, that will probably not be possible." I took the opportunity to remind him that the lion's share of the rates increase will go to Strathclyde regional council, which is still spending £43 million in excess of Government guidelines.

Bearing in mind that comment, the Opposition seem to be showing synthetic concern for commercial ratepayers. Only a few months ago they wrote in their campaign briefing:

> "There isn't a single shred of evidence to show that rates force firms to lay off workers or deter new businesses from starting up."

I welcome the conversion of the Opposition, whether on the deathbed or not. I hope that when they return to Scotland and redraft their campaign briefing, they will be prepared to acknowledge that high rates harm the commercial and industrial health of this country.

Perhaps I ought to refer to the warped priorities of the Liberal spokesman. I am not surprised that the Scottish spokesman for the Liberal party has not had the guts to turn up today, nor that today its strength is only one eighth. Having accused the Secretary of State of adopting warped priorities in providing aid amounting to £40 million to commercial ratepayers, I am not surprised that he has stayed in his fastness of Gordon, albeit temporarily.

Even with this scheme, many of my constituents will still be paying the highest rates in the country. I echo their demand for reform. Although this measure is welcome, it represents a further tinkering with the system and is no substitute for the radical reform which all of us want. Scottish ratepayers should take note of what is said in the debate. They will clearly see that it is the Conservative party which shows real concern for ratepayers and, moreover, that the Conservative party is the only party with the political will to grasp the nettle and to introduce rating reform.

7.34 pm

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): I have only a few points to make, simply because the Secretary of State appears in the Bill to be forking out instead of clawing back. Therefore, it would be wise to take the money and run. Prior to the announcement of the rates relief which we are discussing today, the Scottish Nationalist party stressed that any relief given must be new money from the Treasury. We are glad to note that this will happen, but we are concerned that the full £50 million allocation may not be used. It would be scandalous if it were not used. Even the £50 million of relief represents only about one and a half days of Scottish oil revenues. Compared with the money pouring into the Treasury from Scotland, and compared with the amounts being spent on fortress Falklands and Trident, £50 million is small beer. It is essential that that sum of money should not be reduced.

What will happen in subsequent years? We may assume that two or three years will elapse before a major reform is seriously discussed in Parliament. At the beginning of his speech the Secretary of State omitted to deal with a point which I subsequently put, while the right hon. Gentleman was absent, to his hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), namely, the enormous discrepancies between the assessments in Scotland and England. I do not agree with the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) that there should be uniform rating throughout the United Kingdom. The situation in the two countries is different. However, the case that I mentioned earlier showed that there was a difference of 25 times between the rating of the Celtic football ground and the football ground of a team in England. Therefore, the Secretary of State ought to take into account such enormous anomalies.

As the Government have promised that the rating system will be reformed, what plans have they made to take care of the position in Scotland during 1986-87? To help to spread the benefit that may be obtained through the rebates, the qualifying level should be set at a lower figure for the increase in the rateable value instead of the three times increase which is proposed in the Bill.

I suggest that a limit of £10,000 should be placed upon rebates. This would ensure that as many businesses as possible, in particular small businesses, would benefit from the rebate. I hope that those with large revaluations will appeal before applying for a rebate. If their appeal is successful, the rebate may not be needed. More money will then be left in the kitty for those who are faced with greatly increased rates bills.

The Bill will be enacted. Nobody shoots a one-legged Santa Claus. Today, however, the Secretary of State for Social Services said that the poorest people would be obliged to pay 20 per cent. towards their rates bills. This burden will have to be borne by those who are currently in receipt of rates relief. It shows the brazen effrontery of this Government. On the day that the Secretary of State for Scotland is giving away money with the one hand, his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is taking it back with the other. When looked at in these terms, one sees that Santa Claus does not have a leg to stand on.

7.38 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): First, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on having obtained a huge sum which will benefit the ratepayers of Scotland, both commercial and domestic. It is not good for the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) to pooh-pooh such a sum of money as small, when comparatively huge sums of money are spent on transport for his constituents. Indeed, at least a quarter of that sum is spent on transport in his constituency, so a little modesty might suit him better.

Mr. Donald Stewart: The highest subsidies for transport in the United Kingdom are in London, where an enormous mass of rolling stock is needed to take in commuters in the morning and take them out again at night. Expenditure on transport in the Western Isles is peanuts compared with that.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am not an expert on transport in London, but I am informed about the right hon. Gentleman's constituency. I assure him that the sums which it enjoys from other people's pockets are disproportionate to those enjoyed in any other part of Scotland.

Mr. McQuarrie: The right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) should have no cause for complaint. He should remember the integrated development programme, which is expressly suited to his constituency, and which injects massive sums into the Western Isles. It would be much better to spend that money in the Grampian region, and especially in my constituency of Banff and Buchan.

Mr. Fairbairn: Yes, and if there is any left over, perhaps it could go towards transport in London.

We have seen some remarkable schizophrenia in the debate. As ever, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) made a fluent and cogent speech, but Socialists and Socialist authorities have always believed that the people who should be milked are those who own houses and shops and run businesses——

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): And castles.

Mr. Fairbairn: Yes, indeed, and I think I am right in saying that it was a Socialist Government who said that ancient monuments such as myself and the house in which I live should be derated to some extent. I am grateful for that. It is strange for the Opposition suddenly to be on the side of those whom they have always regarded as the milch cows for their extravagance. Fortunately, I represent a constituency that is not of Edinburgh airport, and since Edinburgh airport is not of the capital city I have few reasons to go there, but I am horrified by the extent to which it is being defiled to advertise the extravagance in which the gauleiters of the Supreme Soviet of Edinburgh indulge.

The system of rating taxation has never been fair, and it has always amazed me that the Conservative party should have tolerated it. It is a tax on everything which we believe the humblest, the poorest, the youngest and the oldest should be able to achieve and enjoy. The buying of a house probably represents the largest expenditure that most people will ever undertake.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I am following the hon. and learned Gentleman's speech with great care. He seems to be suggesting that only property owners pay rates, but that is untrue. Those who rent properties, whether from the private sector or from local authorities, also pay rates. That must be said repeatedly, because they get no credit for their contributions.

Mr. Fairbairn: That is slightly inaccurate, because I understand that only 26 per cent. of those who pay rates do not receive some form of rate rebate.

Rates are a tax on the home, which is the centre of family life. As it is normal for an ordinary family or an ordinary human being to wish to associate themselves with the home, unless they must move home for employment reasons, or unless they become more prosperous, they will not normally wish to change their homes. Although their children may marry and move away, the family home is still fundamentally important. Therefore, rates are a tax on the most important heritable object with which we are associated. I should tell the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) that the more homes are merely hired from some wretched local authority, the less significant they are to the family. The greater the influence of the home and the family, the greater will be social cohesion and decency.

The tax does not take into account the ability of the occupant to pay. It is rendered on a property regardless of whether its inhabitants have a huge income or a petty one. That is unfair. It is especially offensive because domestic rating is a complete disincentive to improving one's property because one is punished for doing so. When one considers the GEAR scheme and the magnificent reconstruction of the tenements in Edinburgh and Glasgow, such as Georgie Dalry, Maryhill and Trongate, one sees that the improvement of property is a great social benefit. Therefore, it is extremely unfortunate to have a tax which is a disincentive to improvement.

My right hon. Friend the Secretay of State has frequently said that the revaluation is all the assessors' doing. I agree, but the bases upon which the assessors do it are extremely unfair, arbitrary and inequitable in practice. The assessors must try to be like Pontius Pilate —absolutely fair between Barabbas and Christ—but it does not alter the fact that, in practice, the assessors and their staffs do not visit similar houses. They do not know what the differences are. They cannot make an intelligent comparison between a newsagent in Auchterarder and a newsagent in Aberdeen or in Ayrshire. Therefore, all that has happened is that a system based on appalling inequities and contrary to all the principles of Scottish law has been demonstrated to be even more unfair by revaluation.

The myth about revaluation is that it is meant to make everything fair again. It is like saying that, in five years' time, the man who has made a million, the man who has made nothing and the man who has squandered a million will be equal.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fairbairn: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. and learned Gentleman shows such appalling ignorance of the rating system that he should give way.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am sure that I cannot beat the hon. Gentleman for that.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. and learned Gentleman should know that one guideline for revaluation which the assessors are supposed to follow is generally to ensure that the revaluations do not greatly change values in one part of Scotland as against another, except in exceptional circumstances——

Mr. McQuarrie: That is not true.

Mr. Hughes: It is true. The general understanding is that the assessors should ensure that valuations increase in broadly similar bands throughout the country, except where exceptional circumstances make it impossible.

Mr. Fairbairn: I understand guidelines, and I have always been against them. I do not like the word "guidelines" and I shall give the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North an example of the effect of guidelines.

The Socialist council in Glasgow has closed down almost every business in Jamaica street. If the assessor goes there, he will say, "This looks like Bhopal after the explosion. We had better decrease the rating valuation." However, if he comes to Perth high street, or Auchterarder high street, or Blairgowrie high street, and sees that the businesses that have been driven out of Glasgow have opened up in those streets, he will say, "These look like prosperous places." When one council has been extravagant, the guidelines will penalise places where the councils have not been extravagant.

That is what happens because of the actions of the unneutral political masters of neutral assessors. Socialist councils take a sadistic view of properties and those who operate them and regard businessses as places to be looted.

Mr. Dewar: May I divert the hon. and learned Gentleman — helpfully, I hope — from his somewhat ruminative look at the rating system?

It has become clear, and will become clearer, that there will be a considerable shortfall on the payout under the Bill. It may not be £20 million, as I have suggested, but it will be substantial. What is the hon. and learned Gentleman's attitude to that? Will he be happy if £20 million of the £50 million is merely handed back to the Treasury?

Mr. Fairbairn: I have always admired the hon. Gentleman's prescience, and he has made a point which I was about to develop. My regard for his intelligence has had corroboration from his intervention.

Not only is the rating system unfair, but the Secretary of State's gallant attempts to make fair the unfairness of the revaluation will be even more unfair. Let us examine the microcosm of Braco, where the domestic rate increases throughout the village range between 25 and 40 per cent. in real terms. Not a single house will benefit under the Bill.

It is all very well to say that inflation is 5 or 6 per cent., but people facing large increases in their biggest annual bill cannot budget for or afford such extra sums. It is not the fault of the Secretary of State, but it is an unfairness which we must correct, because the people involved have bought their own homes and are doing the best for their families, but they are being punished.

Tourism is particularly important in Perthshire. Hotels and bed-and-breakfast establishments have to set their terms a year ahead. They cannot be altered because of a rating revaluation. A hotel in Comrie faces a rate increase from £7,900 to £10,000 a year—an extra £40 a week.

For those who are thirsty, let me give the example of a small company in my constituency that owns nine pubs. Prices in those pubs cannot be increased, because the Chancellor has already imposed increases of 2p a tot. To pay for those rate increases, the pubs will have to sell an extra 325,000 pints of beer, or 355,000 more whiskies. Even for the thirstiest—even for the right hon. Member for the Western Isles—that would be an awful lot of drinking. It is not a realistic burden to impose on people who are involved in tourism, which is one of our major industries.

No one is a prouder Scotsman or less a nationalist than I, but I have to say that another major unfairness is the difference between Scotland and England. For example, a six-bedroomed hotel in St. Andrews will pay £32,000 in rates, but a similar hotel in St. Albans will pay only £5,000. Those hotels are supposed to be competing for the same tourists.

The small businesses that have not quite qualified under the three factor will be hit hardest. If people's domestic rates go up, they can reduce the amount that they spend at the hairdressers or with the picture framer. The small businesses, which have already been hard hit, will be hit even harder because their customers will face bigger domestic rate bills. My picture framer has taken on a young man from the YOP scheme who is fully trained and an excellent employee. The increase in the picture framer's rates bill is exactly the same as the salary of that young man, whom he wishes to keep on. What does he have to do?

The admirable efforts of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will demonstrate, by the chaotic and unfair comparisons that will reflect like magnifying mirrors the idiocies of the system, a great unfairness. I urge my right hon. Friend to think carefully about whether, if there is a shortfall, the money could be used to help those who are having to pay an extra 25 to 40 per cent. on their principal annual bill. People who budget carefully cannot afford such increases and, of course, there is next year and the year after to come. I do not know whether there will be appeals under the new system, but I know that the cost of appealing to the revaluation appeal court is considerable.

Every time a defence has been made of this wretched revaluation, people have said, "The law of Scotland is different and we are proud to have a different law. It has compelled us to have a revaluation." I have an answer for the Secretary of State. Let us change the law on our own; let us not wait for objections from the Home Office, the Department of the Environment and the rest who are screaming for different systems because their empires are affected. Let us just have a new system in Scotland. Let us show them. After all, we have shown them how to deal with football hooliganism and a whole lot of other things recently.

Let us have a new rating system set out in the Queen's Speech for Scotland only, and if England thinks that it is a rotten system it need not follow us. Let us do what suits Scotland, because the penalty for the system that we have, the revaluation that we have done and the extravagance of the councils is that many businesses will go to the wall and many families will not be able to pay their principal bill. So let us tackle the problem ourselves. I congratulate the Secretary of State, but let him go further and do for Scotland what ought to be done for Scotland. Let England do what it wants in its own time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Mr. James Wallace.

8.1 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I shared some of the conclusions——

Mr. Robert Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At the risk of incurring your displeasure, I should like to say that, while members of minority parties have rights, so have majority parties. So far only one Back Bencher from the majority party in opposition, the Labour party, has been called.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not criticising the difficult job that the Chair has in calling hon. Members to speak. Mr. Wallace.

Mr. Wallace: While I agree with some of the conclusions reached by the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), I do not agree with some of his reasoning. However, the time is ripe for the rating reform that he called for. I agree that there is no reason why Scotland should have to wait for England to catch up.

I welcome the legislation, although it does not contain everything that one would wish to see. None the less, it is generally to be welcomed. As might have been expected, there has been some self-congratulation on the Government Benches. It would be churlish not to acknowledge the success of the Scottish Office in prising a significant sum out of a Chancellor of the Exchequer who is not renowned for his open-handed generosity. Indeed, it is reassuring to know that if an argument is good enough, and if the Secretary of State fights his corner, new money can be found. I am sure that that message and particularly the fact that the Secretary of State fought his corner will have been noted by the teaching profession in Scotland.

Equally, if self-congratulation is fair on Conservative Benches, Opposition parties, too, can take some of the credit for keeping up pressure on the Government to make some of the changes. It is only fair to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and other of my right hon. and hon. Friends, even before the full effect of revaluation on the commercial sector dawned upon the Government, were making representations. Those have been continued both in correspondence and on the Floor of the House.

I wish the Bill a fair wind and confirm that we shall co-operate in getting it on to the statute book. It is not the Opposition's role to be blindly uncritical of what the Government are doing. My first point of criticism is that to date we have not had a reassurance that the additional money will be forthcoming next year or in subsequent years of the present quinquennium. The rates that will be levied in forthcoming years will be based on the same rateable values that are causing concern and anxiety this year. The only idea as to future plans that we have had was given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the Scottish Conservative conference, in the passages that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) quoted. He hinted that he would be reverting to his more typical tight-fistedness. Without the reassurance that that sum will be repeated in future years, what is being offered to the ratepayers, particularly to the commercial ratepayers, is not so much a lifeline as a short stay of execution.

When I met several retailers in my constituency last month, what caused them considerable anxiety was not simply the size of the rate increases that they faced—some were about 600 or 700 per cent. — but the uncertainty about whether the Government would provide relief for them. They had business decisions to make. They had to decide whether to cut staff and what overheads could be cut or dispensed with. Some of them even had to consider whether they could continue trading at all. At that time such decisions could be made only tentatively. It might be fair to excuse the Government this year for some delay as they assess the situation, but if we are to treat our small business sector with proper respect we cannot impose the same uncertainty on it next year. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross made that point graphically in the examples that he gave.

Many small business men are operating on narrow margins. Their rates bill, particularly after revaluation, forms a large part of their annual expenditure. If small businesses are to exercise financial responsibility in budgeting and planning ahead, and if they are to show the enterprise that many of us would like to see, it is only fair that they should know at a relatively early stage where they stand vis-à-vis next year's rates bill. We should like reassurances from the Minister during the passage of the Bill. If that is not possible, I think that it would not be unfair to seek an announcement — a favourable announcement—before the summer recess, or, at least, early in the autumn.

My second point is about qualification for payment. There is no doubt that the across-the-board approach that has been adopted has administrative simplicity. No doubt some of the larger chain stores are adversely affected and feel the pinch of rate increases, but they are not affected in the same way or threatened as much as several of the smaller businesses. Larger chain stores with branches in many towns throughout Scotland could reap the benefit many times over, whereas small businesses that fail to qualify under the multiple of three would not receive any assistance.

Mr. Fairbairn: While I agree that chain stores will have more resources, stores that have moved into country towns, which will be operating on much smaller margins, and which have had huge increases, must ask themselves whether they will stay there. Again, that has a big impact on local employment.

Mr. Wallace: I take the hon. and learned Gentleman's point that in many smaller towns the introduction of those stores has been worthwhile, and their head office will have to consider the matter. However, many of the larger stores could qualify for assistance, and the viability of many such stores is not threatened, so there appears to be some rough justice. One might have to consider the cut-off point and whether it should be linked to the number of premises, and what the total amount should be that any firm throughout the length and breadth of Scotland could claim back as a rebate.

In introducing the Bill, the Secretary of State admitted that there would still be higher rate bills for several domestic and commercial ratepayers throughout Scotland. He said that the Bill would not necessarily help them. High rate bills will be faced by many who qualify for assistance, and particularly by those who just fail to qualify. I have a list of the revaluation and rate payment increases of many of the retail outlets in the Shetland part of my constituency. There are rateable value percentage increases of 300 per

cent., 500 per cent., and 600 per cent. Many, indeed all of those outlets will qualify for assistance under the Bill, and I am sure that they will be grateful for it. Nevertheless they will still be paying a substantially higher amount in rates this year than last year. The same applies to the Orkney part of my constituency, where people face rate bills that are 30 per cent., 40 per cent., and 50 per cent. higher, which is many times the average rate of inflation.

The Secretary of State and other Conservative Members have tended to put the blame for increased rate bills, as opposed to what may be attributed to revaluation, on high-spending authorities. However, it is not many months since the Secretary of State, from the Dispatch Box, praised Orkney Islands council for having kept within guidelines. Yet commercial and domestic ratepayers in Orkney are also having to pay considerably higher rates this year. That cannot be attributed to a high-spending authority. It can be attributed in part to the reduction in central Government assistance and, in some cases in my constituency, to derating of external plant and equipment. This has resulted in a multi-million pound handback of money which would otherwise have been paid by the oil companies. The oil companies will not feel the pinch if they do not have that amount of money. I am sure that many ratepayers in my constituency would have benefited far more if that derating measure had never been taken, for the spurious reason that it would bring Scottish law into line with English law. It did not do that. Indeed, should one attempt to bring Scottish law into line with English law? The measure has had a serious impact on rating levels in Orkney and Shetland. Oil companies have benefited at the expense of smaller businesses and domestic ratepayers.

What happens if the Government do not use the £50 million that has been set aside for this purpose? I join with those who say that the balance should be applied to give relief to ratepayers and should not be handed back to the Treasury. Perhaps a sliding scale should be introduced for those who pay the highest increases. Perhaps there should be a sliding scale for those whose rate increases are between 2·5 and 3 times the previous level so that that important sector of the small business community is given some relief.

The exemptions in clause 1 mean that the whisky industry will not receive any advantage in the Bill. Conventional wisdom has it that the industrial sector has benefited from revaluation. Indeed, the cut in derating occurred in the light of that. Nevertheless, the whisky industry seems to be an exception to the rule. Revaluation generally has increased the amount of cash that is paid. The Scottish Whisky Association claims:

"Revaluation has increased the amount of cash paid in respect of rates on distilleries and warehouses by an average of 36 per cent."

In my constituency, there has been one cash increase of 100 per cent. and an average increase of 82 per cent. The average increase in the Lowlands is 75 per cent. and on Speyside it is 41 per cent. These high additional sums must be found in an industry that cannot be said to be prospering.

The Chancellor made a specific point in his Budget statement of helping the industry by pegging the duty on whisky to the inflation rate. He recognised the industry's plight. Although that measure was welcome, it was not enough, especially after the abolition last year of stock relief. The increased rates are a further substantial blow. I have written to the Secretary of State about it. I know that the Under-Secretary of State will look into the matter. Has the hon. Gentleman been able to make any progress in providing assistance to this important industry which makes a valuable contribution to the Scottish economy?

The Bill underlines the extent to which radical reform of our rating system is needed. I welcome the fact that the Government have again put reform of the rating system on the agenda. It is no secret that my right hon. and hon. Friends favour a system of local income tax, especially one that is made more administratively easy with computerisation. In the past, we have heard pledges to reform the rating system. Today we have heard a more specific statement, that a proposal will be brought forward by the end of this year. I recall reading about Ministers making the same statement at the Dispatch Box about the road equivalent tariff. We were told that it was a complex matter involving many problems but that the Government would come forward with a solution at the end of the year. That statement was made in 1981 and 1982 and, eventually, in 1984 the Government told us that they had examined the problem and had decided to do nothing. Many of us fear that we are slipping into a similar pattern with rates. My right hon. and hon. Friends will continue to press the Government to ensure that, this time, they meet their commitment to undertake the much-needed and long overdue reform of the rating system.

8.14 pm

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I am happy to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland on the speed of his response to the most pressing problem for Scottish householders and small business men. The amount that my right hon. Friend has given during the past few months is no small beer. He began his measures when it was obvious that revaluation would affect ratepayers. He increased by £19 million the domestic element of rate support grant provision, increasing domestic rate relief from 1p to 5p in the pound in post-revaluation terms. Subsequently, an additional £38·5 million was granted. We now have a total rebate of £50 million. I hope that the Government guarantee that amount.

The actions of the Secretary of State have finally convinced the Government that rating reform is necessary. I refute the challenge of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) that this is just a matter of expediency. It is a matter not of expediency but of commitment. The Government have always been committed to rating reform and assisting the ratepayer. If anyone should be thoroughly ashamed of expediency it is the Opposition, who talked earlier about devolution and the establishment of a Scottish assembly. They know that, during the 1970s, that was their expedient response to what was happening in the Scottish national camp at that time.

I hope that the firm stand taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State means that many of the small businesses in my constituency will remain viable. Many shop doors have already closed. I hope that some, which were about to take that step, will remain open. It cannot be assumed, however, that this relief which is offered in part to commercial enterprises will serve to assist all these people. That worries me greatly because, although the proposals will have great merit, we must take account of the fact that those to whom the multiple factor of three does not apply will still pay much more than last year. There are some small businesses in villages in my

[Mrs. Anna McCurley]

constituency that cannot tolerate the excessive increases of the past year. It is less noticeable in the cities when premises change hands or shut down, but when shop premises in villages and small towns lie empty or are neglected because rates are too high there are deleterious effects on the spirit and fabric of life in those areas.

I am pleased that additional finances will be given to help householders. Although there was exhilaration at the press conferences because of the announcement of help to our commercial firms, some individuals were still reticent about the measures. Domestic ratepayers are still paying a great deal more than previously. The real problem occurs when rates are of more worry than markets. Even the choice of moving down market is closed to many because of the sheer costs of moving.

Another problem which I have encountered goes slightly beyond the terms of the Bill. I have discovered on travelling round my constituency that the arbitrariness of these increases in rateable values has been remarkable.

I want to explain how the assessor was completely out of touch with the accurate position for one of my constituents who had established a small market garden business. It will take two or three years to get the business going fully, and during that time he will receive subsidies. Surely that should explain to any assessor that agricultural premises are involved. But no, the assessor demanded that my constituent pay rates on his property being classed as a luxury bungalow. I do not know how many hon. Members know my constituency, but it includes a few areas with so-called luxury bungalows. The bungalow in question is in a conservation area, and meets the minimum standards required. It has three rooms—two bedrooms—and houses two adults and a child. That hardly constitutes a luxury bungalow. When my constituent challenged the valuation and told the assessor that a much larger house up the road had been given a lower valuation, the assessor uprated the valuation of the other house. That caused fearsome strife in the village.

Assessors do not appear to know the difference between a garage and a store. My constituent was angered when, having demonstrated that the shed next to his house was not a garage, he was told, "That is only because you do not choose to use it as a garage." That is ridiculous, because the shed is used to store his business equipment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I am intrigued by the use of the term "luxury bungalow." I have experience of assessors talking about good and bad areas. Does my hon. Friend share my concern that there is a little too much subjectivity creeping into assessments because there is no rental evidence? I wonder what rental evidence there is for the sort of place that she has described.

Mrs. McCurley: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend that an element of subjectivity looms large in assessments. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take that point on board.

I am disappointed that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is not here this evening. When he was at Perth, he took credit for the new money that had been made available. It would have been nice had we had the opportunity to thank him — and also to remind him that until there is a new rating system he must honour in full the commitment to the ratepayers embodied in this Bill.

Under the Bill, the Secretary of State can continue the scheme, and will no doubt wish to do so during the next few years of the quinquennium. I wish him all the best in determining the allocation of resources. I hope that the Treasury appreciates the seriousness of the position for ratepayers in Scotland. No doubt the dexterity demonstrated by my right hon. Friend will hold him in good stead. However, I admit to having the same concern as that expressed earlier by my hon. Friends about whether the full £50 million allocation will be used. I am not as scrupulous as my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst). I would use any surpluses for additional relief for commercial ratepayers.

I am worried that we are asking Scottish authorities to administer the cost of the rebate, which will amount to about £1 million. It is not a great deal of money, but a principle is involved. Perhaps the bulk of that financial burden will be placed on the more prudent authorities, some of which are Conservative controlled. I am aware of the deep division between local government and central Government about continuing financial restraints. However, I remind the House that only one third of the increase in rates concerns revaluation, while two thirds arises because of excess spending by local government. I want the rift to be healed so that we can obtain co-operation from local government in being accountable for its spending, and not simply using the prevailing conflict to be bloody-minded at the expense of the ratepayers.

I have more respect for local authorities than simply to regard them as purveyors of bins, bogs and burials—indeed, I have served on a local authority—but I wish that they would confine their activities to those for which they were established. I have a dossier of what I would term political abuses by local authorities amounting to many thousands of pounds. It upset me when the Opposition quibbled with my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) when he mentioned that. Since May 1984 the city of Edinburgh district council has made political use of council funds amounting to more than £70,000. That includes donating money for public meetings on behalf of the Chile Democratico. That may be legal, but there is something very wrong when most of the councillors were elected not to act as the next Secretary of State for Defence, but to ensure that bins were emptied and roads were repaired. It appears that the Labour candidates' selection process now throws up the type of councillor who believes that his mandate makes him responsible for national defence, foreign affairs, civil liberties, national if not global ecology and anything else one can name.

If we are to believe the constant call of the Left—that housing is in an awful state, that education is being decimated and that cuts in finance are causing hardship — it is reasonable to inquire how Labour councillors find the time to take on national tasks. It is difficult to explain to an electorate how they can attend the second international nuclear-free zone conference in Cordoba in Spain but not find the time to attend a tenants' association meeting. That is particularly hard as the Cordoba conference lasted only three days, but many of the Scottish Labour councillors stayed there for a week—no doubt at the ratepayers' expense.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I accept that there are differences of opinion about what should and should not be done by councillors, but if the hon. Lady is suggesting that certain

councillors received expenses for staying in Spain longer than was necessary, I hope that she will name them and take to task the financial officers of the local authorities that sanctioned such expenditure.

Mrs. McCurley: I shall happily take on that task.

The new breed of Labour councillor — [HON. MEMBERS: "Name them."] As I said, I shall be happy to take on that task. I shall be in correspondence about that matter.

Mr. Robert Hughes: That is not good enough. The hon. Lady should be prepared to substantiate her charge with names, dates and local authorities, either in or outside the House. She should not make a general smear on councillors which goes far beyond the reasonable partisan politics of this House.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My hon. Friend will be aware that I have in the past done exactly what the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) has been asking for. I have reported to the local authority auditor the city of Dundee and its councillors. Had they not stopped doing what they were doing, they would have been prosecuted. They had been printing a news sheet and did not even—*[Interruption.]* The principle is the same, and the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) knows it. He has friends serving on councils who do not always obey the law.

Mrs. McCurley: I should like now to continue with my own contribution.

The new breed of Labour councillor is quite prepared to spend ratepayers' money to further his own causes. That is sad, because many decent people in the old Labour party are now prepared to support some of the nonsense on which Labour councils are spending our money. It is obvious that local authorities are finding legal ways to fund organisations which support their own political viewpoint. In that way, those councillors enjoy benefits which are not available to their political opponents. That gives them a clear advantage in financial terms and also in regard to the scale and effort of any campaign. If little or no time is required to organise funds for a campaign, more time and effort can be devoted to the campaign proper. It seems to be only the Left that is abusing the system at present. However, if no action is taken, it is likely that before too long every party may start to make use of this new system of finance. That is why it is extremely important to alter the rating system to exclude those abuses.

It is to be hoped that the findings of the Widdicombe committee will strengthen the demand to ensure a fairer and more democratic system, and one which reflects the proper functions of local authorities. If local authorities behave themselves, we might just be able to manage with the system that we have; but as they have abused the system, changes are now urgent. Any money that we expend at the moment to help our hard-pressed ratepayers will be reimbursed suitably in the future when those changes are introduced and implemented.

8.34 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I very much regret the fact that the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) made such disgraceful allegations of illegality without one shred of evidence to back them up. It is no use the hon. Lady waving a news sheet which she has received from the Conservative Central Office.

Mrs. McCurley: It is not a news sheet.

Mr. Hughes: If the hon. Lady has names of councillors who she believes have broken the law with regard to expenses, she has a duty to name them, either in this House or outside it, otherwise she is an accessory after the fact in breaching the law.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No.

Whenever Conservative Members have an inadequate case, they use the grossest smears to cloud the issue. I thought much more highly of the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde before she made her speech. I hope that she will do me the courtesy of naming names, or withdrawing her general allegation.

Mr. Fairbairn: The hon. Member makes a strange case. Socialist councillors went to Cordoba for a fatuous conference which had nothing whatever to do with local government. If a councillor can get to a place such as Cordoba at the expense of the ratepayers, it is not very expensive for him to have a holiday while he is there.

Mr. Hughes: With respect, that is not what the hon. Lady said. Her allegation goes much wider and much deeper than that.

Mr. Henderson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No. Several of my hon. Friends want to take part in the debate, so I must get on with my speech.

There has been a general welcome for the Bill, in so far as it helps commercial and domestic ratepayers, and I share that general welcome to some extent, especially as it is now clear from clause 1 that it is at least possible for the rebates to continue for more than one year if the Secretary of State thinks fit. The Secretary of State was pressed on that issue, very largely by the Opposition, and eventually the provision appeared in the Bill. Whether he will allow the rebates to continue after next year is another matter. I suppose that, even if it is for only one year, we should be grateful for small mercies, but there is one vital question that must be answered by the Secretary of State.

As the £50 million—whether it is used this year or not is not the point at this stage—is available as new money this year, is it committed for as long as the transitional system lasts, until we have a new rating system, or are we to revert next year to £20 million, £30 million or £40 million being removed from the health budget, the education budget, or some other budget to meet the demands of the rebate system? The Secretary of State must give a clear answer to that question. Unless we have a clear answer, he will be guilty of deception. He has our consent for the Bill to go through without challenge, on the basis that it is to last for a considerable time. I hope that he will put our minds at rest on that.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No, I must continue with my speech.

I am sorry that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) is not here. He pontificated about the rating system and seemed to labour under the illusion that only house owners pay rates. When I

[Mr. Hughes]

challenged him on the point and told him that all householders were eligible to pay rates and were eligible for assessment, his reply was that most of them live in local authority houses and do not pay rates because they get a rebate. That showed that the hon. and learned Gentleman knows little or nothing about the system. All householders are eligible to pay rates. The fact that some of them do not pay full rates and that some of them pay no rates is a reflection of their circumstances.

It is interesting that in the statement by the Secretary of State for Social Services today he pointed out that 7 million householders receive some help with rate bills and that 3 million householders pay no rates. That simply reflects the poverty of people. The Secretary of State is to compound that poverty by saying that everyone now has to pay a minimum of 20 per cent. of his rates. Where is the compassion and the care that we hear so much about from the Government? They are making the poorest of all people—those who under their system cannot afford to pay any rates whatever—contribute at least 20 per cent. The contempt of Conservatives for local authority tenants is revealed by the way in which they speak about ratepayers as though ratepayers were only those who own their own property, and deny any rights whatever to those who are in rented property.

Before coming to the generalities of the Bill I have one or two technical points to make. I understood the Secretary of State to say that automatically local authorities will examine all ratepayers in their area and decide whether they are to get a rebate under the Bill, and that ratepayers will not have to make application for it. I wonder how that is to be done. It will be a major administrative task. I do not see how it can be done within the cost of £1 million that is mentioned in the Bill. It is grossly unfair that local authorities should be expected to meet the administrative cost.

The difficulty arises very largely because the balance as between one class of ratepayer and another has been disturbed. The Secretary of State comes to the Dispatch Box and blithely tells us that there has been a change in the relative gross annual values. The reason why the industrial ratepayers' gross annual value has gone down is that business is in such a parlous state. That is the state to which the Government have reduced industry in Scotland, and it is not able to pay the share of the rates that it used to pay.

The Secretary of State should re-examine the timing of the Bill. It does not come into effect until two months after it has been enacted. He cannot produce a statutory instrument until the Act has been brought into force. That means that we shall not see an order—an affirmative order according to the Bill—until the middle of the summer recess. The House has never been known to sit beyond that glorious day, 12 August, and therefore it will be September or October before we return to this matter. We shall be at the end of the financial year before the right hon. Gentleman tells the local authorities what the rebates will be and before they are paid. That is nonsense.

I reiterate what my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said. The Bill is supposed to deal with an abnormal situation and is to be passed at great speed. I therefore do not see why the Secretary of State should not bring the Bill into force at great speed.

If all the values had remained relative one to another, and if the proportion paid by industrial, commercial and domestic ratepayers had remained broadly in balance—I do not know how three different things can be balanced, but never mind—the rates paid by the different classes of ratepayer would have been much the same but for rate increases. I accept that.

The problem is that we have all been aware for a long time that the rating system provides rough justice. It is not fair. The system has been generally palatable because it has meant that rates have not been increasing enormously. The problems of the rating system have been accentuated by two factors. The first is the greater demand on and greater responsibilities of local government. I reject the idea that local government has somehow decided to spend as much money as it can just because it wants to spend more money. That is not true. Local authorities spend more money because they have greater responsibilities to meet.

The second reason why the problems have been compounded is the inexorable reduction of the central Government share of financial support.

I hope that we shall have a general debate about the future of the rating system, long before the Government are ready to produce a Green Paper. Whatever the faults of the rating system—I accept that it has many, and I could speak for an hour on its different faults—the one advantage it has is that local authorities are reasonably certain about their income. With local income tax, sales tax or some other such system, a local authority will not know what its income will be. It needs some certainty, and a least the present rating system provides that.

The certainty of income is diminished by the way in which the Secretary of State constantly revises his provision downwards. I saw the Secretary of State for Scotland on "Weekend World" a few weeks ago. It is not often that I pay compliments, but I am bound to say that he dealt with the difficult situation extremely well. He defended his case well. One of the most significant concessions that he made on that programme was that he accepted that there had to be an element of central Government support to provide for local authority services. At the heart of the argument about the rating system—the provision for people and the amount of rates to be paid—is the size of that element. So long as central Government reduce their element of the provision, the more rates paid locally will have to increase. That is an obvious truism. That is the main reason why we have problems.

There must be a great deal more planning and thought than has gone into the Bill. Local government is there to provide a service. I do not defend abuses in local government or those who spend money illegally. I do not concede the case made by the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde and all the other hon. Members who go on about "political purposes". The actions are legal, but even if I were to concede that they may be inadvisable, which I do not, the amount of money involved is a small proportion of the gross amount of money paid by local authorities. That is not the problem.

The problem is that neither the Secretary of State nor any of his hon. Friends has ever said a decent word about local councils and the needs that they have to face. Instead of being constantly at loggerheads with local government, the Secretary of State should be in constant dialogue with it about providing for people's needs. The Government are

not interested in ratepayers. They are interested only in one class of ratepayer. They are not interested in the services that ratepayers expect to receive — decent housing, education and other local services. All that the Government wish to do is to whine about the rates, but the objective of local government is to provide the best services available for those in need. I commend local government for that.

I wish that the Government would pay tribute to the many local councillors who give hours and hours of their unpaid time and in many cases sacrifice their careers merely to receive brickbats, and not commendations, from Conservative Members, who should be ashamed of their narrow-minded and bigoted attitude towards local government.

8.46 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): May I say to my right hon. Friend on behalf of 3,100 domestic ratepayers and 700 non-domestic ratepayers in my constituency who will benefit from the Bill, for this relief much thanks. Businesses in Callendar blazed the trail for an event which turned out to be happening in other parts of Scotland such as St. Andrews and elsewhere.

We must be clear tonight about what the Bill is about and what it is trying to achieve. It is not about reducing the excessive rate burden that ratepayers have to face. It is about protecting those people who have found themselves with a completely unexpected and sudden increase in their rates bill which they cannot meet. There is a clear distinction there. There are many people with large and intolerable rates bills whose rateable values will not have increased more than threefold.

Opposition Members have ritualistically asked about what will happen next year and whether my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be the bogy-man or whether my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be St. George, or perhaps St. Andrew, on his charger and win the extra £50 million. There is no reason why the scheme could not be continued next year and be funded from the overall rate support. I commend that to my right hon. Friend as a possible way of dealing with the problem.

May I also thank my right hon. Friend for having acted against Stirling district council? He has required it to rebate 3p to the ratepayers in my constituency because of its outrageous proposal to keep council house rents well below the Scottish average and to ask ratepayers to foot the bill. It is a matter of deep regret to me that members of the Labour party—I assume that the people who run Stirling district council and Opposition Members who seem to have found sympathy for the ratepayer are in the same party—propose, if I am to believe what I read in the *Stirling Observer*, to obtain counsel's opinion and go to the courts, no doubt at vast expense to the ratepayers, to try to stop that 3p rate being returned to the people in whom Opposition Members have shown such great interest.

The other argument we have heard has been about the rate support grant and the fact that reductions in rate support grant are to blame for the problem. I hope that I shall be forgiven for being parochial and talking about my constituency, but the cuts in rate support grant in Stirling have occurred because of the financial irresponsibility of the district and regional councils. They have decided to spend vast sums. We have heard about trips to Spain but my lot seems to go on trips to eastern Europe. The Central region has spent £10,000 on a brochure to tell everyone what a marvellous job it has been doing over the past 10 years. Stirling district council is spending £100,000 a year on a scheme which is called "Stirling Future World". It is a world that is very much in the future and far removed from the real world. The authority has given more than £250,000 to miners in the region and more than £150,000 to those in the district.

Mr. Henderson: Fife has given £2 million.

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) reminds me in an aside that Fife has given £2 million to the miners. The authorities have made these donations despite the fact that they are overspent on their budgets and incurring penalties and loss of grant that amount to 85 per cent. for Stirling district council and 75 per cent. for the regional council.

There are those who argue that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has been ungenerous. I remind them that he could have taken much more back in reduced rate support grant. He gave every local authority the opportunity to reduce its spending and thereby to get its full rate support grant entitlement. To be fair to the Central region, from being £3 million in excess of its budget it has managed to reduce that sum to about £900,000. Last year Stirling district council started off with £600,000 in the bank and at the end of the year was £600,000 in debt. Its rent subsidies and spending beyond its budget have led the council to seek a rate of 23p whereas it should be only 18½p, as Conservative Members have said. That rate could be set without cutting £10,000 a year on the women's committee and all the other items that are the symbols of the Left. The loss of rate support grant in my patch is due entirely to local government extravagance.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) tried to explain that he was against the consequences of revaluation. He told us that he considered revaluation a good idea at the time but added that there has been too much chopping and changing and that he now wants to be certain of the current position. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) is not in his place. I enjoyed reading the report of his recent speech, in the course of which he argued that Scotland would be disadvantaged if revaluation did not take place. He cited England as an example, and said that Scotland prides itself on quinquennial revaluations.

It is rather disingenuous always to seek to place on the front pages of newspapers examples of Scotland at a disadvantage when set against other parts of the United Kingdom and to fail to draw attention to examples of differences in Scottish law that do not suit popular opinion.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will recognise the injustice of the position that we now face. In the past only a tiny minority have been able successfully to appeal against the rateable value of their property. Thousands appeal and only hundreds are successful. The successful appellants tend to be those who employ expensive professionals, who know all the tricks. If an ordinary man cannot pay his rates bill, he has only the prospect of embarking on a long and arduous appeals procedure and the incurring of professional fees without any guarantee of success at the end of the day. As my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) said, he will have the prospect of never having

[Mr. Forsyth]

his neighbours speak to him again if his appeal is successful because the consequence of that will be an increase in their rates. The appeal process is a daunting task and is one upon which the majority are unwilling to embark, for understandable reasons.

Assessors are answerable to no one and those of us who have been involved in correspondence with them recently have had that fact underlined effectively. The rental evidence on which they supposedly make their judgments is non-existent, thanks to the Rent Acts, which we hope the Government will find time to deal with during the next Session. It is too often said, for example, that Falkirk is a bad area and Killearn is a good one and consequently rateable values in Killearn were increased accordingly. Why is it that council houses in my constituency have incurred an average increase of 2·57 times whereas the average increase in the private sector is 2·75? I hope that the assessor is not using the rental evidence that is produced by the fact that council house rents are depressed as a result of subsidies that are paid, in effect, by ratepayers in the private sector because their properties' rateable values have been increased.

How do we explain the extraordinary differences in rateable values throughout Scotland? A massive number of businesses and domestic ratepayers are benefiting in the Borders, for example, but other areas have benefited to a lesser extent. Are we to conclude that the assessor for the Borders made a terrible mistake last year or that the Borders region is booming and that there has been a sudden hike in rents? There is no evidence to support the second theory. Either the assessor got it very wrong this time or he got it very wrong last time. None of us can say what has happened because none of us can obtain the criteria on which the assessor acted in the first place.

Injustice is done to those in my constituency who have seen the rateable value of their property increase by more than 2·4 times. I was canvassing in Stirling on Saturday and in doing so I was knocking on doors of newish houses. Many of these houses were about 10 years old. I found that they had rate bills of £800, £900 or £1,000. When I told colleagues who represent constituencies south of the border about this, they were stunned. They thought that I was quoting exceptional examples. Such rate bills are intolerable and we must not fool ourselves into thinking that because we are dealing with the problem facing those who have been exceptionally hard hit we are dealing with the basic problem.

There are a number of specific issues within the compass of the Bill which worry me. These include the anomalies to which the hon. Member for Garscadden rightly drew our attention. I understand, for example, that if I erect a new sun lounge, conservatory or extension, it will be rated in the following financial year. If there are two houses that are identical in every respect, one of which has had its rateable value increased by three times and the other by three and a half times because of the sun lounge that was built in the previous year, the owner of the house with the sun lounge will qualify under the scheme and enjoy a 100 per cent. rebate whereas the owner of the other property will not. Such a result would be intolerable. I hope that provision will be made in the statutory instrument for real changes arising out of revaluation and that the measure will not restrict itself to additional building works, for example.

What is the position when there is a change of use, from industrial to commercial, for example, that involves the 40 per cent. derating? If a factory becomes a warehouse and the owner loses the benefit of 40 per cent. derating, will that be regarded as a rating increase of more than three times? Surely that would be wrong. Worse still, what about the new housing estate with identical houses, some of which have been occupied prior to 1 April, and where rateable values have increased following that occupation by more than a factor of three? People who buy the identical house after 1 April will not get the rebate received by the neighbour who moved in prior to the new rule coming into effect. What is worse, assuming the scheme continues, when the person who benefits sells the house, the house will continue to be eligible for subsidy. Therefore, two people in identical houses will pay different rates because of the scheme. I hope that provision will be made to deal with that anomaly.

I am not a great champion of hunting, shooting and fishing, but I have those interests in my constituency. I understand that the present practice is for beats on rivers and shooting interests to be lumped in aggregate and rated as a whole. Can people who have found that the aggregate has increased by 2·9 times on six or seven stretches of a river say that on one stretch it increased five times and on another two times? What is the position of the assessor? Can those people ask for information on each individual beat, and would they qualify?

It is unusual for me to speak in defence of local government, but if we have this scheme, is it fair to ask local government to bear the administration and manpower costs? We cannot continue to tell local government to cut its cloth yet give it extra duties without making resources available. It is also unfair to the ratepayers who will not qualify for support because at the end of the day they will have to meet the bill for paying the extra allowance to more lucky neighbours and fellow citizens.

I ask the next question in the expectation of receiving an answer to it on Wednesday. Will my hon. Friend tell me what the effect has been of the Valuation (Deductions from the Gross Annual Value) (Scotland) Order 1984? I understand from the regional assessor that it has altered the tables so that the difference between the gross annual value and the net value has been reduced because the allowance for maintenance on higher rated property was reduced and the allowance for maintenance on lower rated properties increased. I am told that the net effect—I would be grateful for my hon. Friend's guidance on this—is that in villages in my constituency, such as Killearn, the effective amount knocked off the rates, in crude terms the rateable value, was reduced, which adds about £75 a year to their rates bill. Could we re-examine those tables, and offer some help?

My final point relates to the scheme. It is complicated, although I accept that it is as simple as is possible. It is vital that it is well publicised and that people understand what their rights are and what the effects of revaluation have been. My hon. Friend should counter some of the propaganda that has been funded at ratepayers' expense —the misleading attempt to blame overexpenditure and extravagance on revaluation — by setting the facts straight and explaining how the scheme will help ordinary domestic ratepayers. Far be it from me to incite my hon. Friend to indulge in political propaganda at taxpayers' expense. The Civil Service, unlike local government, has such high standards of professionalism that it would not

allow him to get away with it, if he were so inclined, which I am sure he is not. Has my hon. Friend thought of delivering through every letterbox a leaflet explaining the scheme and its background? That would help those of us who seek to do that through correspondence.

The rating system has always been unjust, and the burden has now become intolerable. I have people who are now putting their houses on the market because they cannot pay their rates bill. We must regard the Bill as a palliative, and proceed urgently to get rid of the domestic rating system altogether and to tackle the problems facing commercial ratepayers. If we do that, we shall receive the widespread support of Scottish people, whether their local authority bills are higher or lower than at present. There is widespread recognition that the present system is unjust. In bringing the scheme into being, I hope that my hon. Friend will try to minimise the injustices and anomalies that we face.

9.4 pm

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Unlike the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), I am here to speak not on behalf of my constituents who this year are facing massive rates increases and who will not benefit one iota from the Bill, but on behalf of the small number of my constituents who will benefit, and for them I am grateful to the Government.

This is the Government's second attempt this year to deal with the effects of revaluation. Had they taken my advice at the end of last year and halted the 1985 revaluation before it was announced, we would not be wasting the time of the House dealing with the £38·5 million given to domestic ratepayers or the £50 million that will be given through the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill.

It was all very well for the Secretary of State for Scotland to ask the Labour Front Bench their opinion on revaluation. He should be fair and recognise that over a period of years voices have been raised in all parts of the House against this revaluation and the one in 1978. Those voices said that Scottish revaluation must be stopped so long as similar revaluations did not take place in England and Wales. The right hon. Gentleman has never listened to those voices. He has always gone ahead on advice from his civil servants — the same civil servants who gave similar advice to the previous Labour Administration and Labour Secretary of State for Scotland.

Given the uproar in Scotland over the effects of the 1985 revaluation, I hope that the political parties in Scotland will look realistically at the whole rating system and try to introduce a system that is fairer to everyone, be they domestic, commercial or industrial ratepayers.

The Bill will give £50 million—although earlier we were told it might be £30 million—to certain categories of domestic and commercial ratepayer. In areas such as mine large industrial complexes will experience great difficulty because of the increases they face in their rates bills, yet they will get no help from the Bill. We should not fall over backwards to congratulate the Government on the small amount of help that they have been forced to give because of opposition from Members of Parliament representing all areas of Scotland. The Government have been forced to do so because they were stupid in continuing with the 1985 revaluation.

One may sometimes think that one is a voice in the wilderness, and if one continues to shout about something like this, people often say, "He is speaking on his own behalf. He does not have the support of his party. He is a wee bit eccentric. If the Labour party says something, he might well say the opposite." However, the political eccentrics are sometimes correct. Tonight the Government have been forced to act because of pressure over the last five and a half years from people such as myself.

Mr. McQuarrie: The hon. Gentleman had made great play about the Government's decision on this revaluation. However, he must accept that during a previous debate on rating and valuation in Scotland the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said:

> "To push the revaluation back by two years will considerably disadvantage the ordinary ratepayer."

He went on to say:

> "I hope that the Minister will tell us what will happen in 1985-86. Will he guarantee a full revaluation then?" — [*Official Report*, 28 July 1982; Vol. 28, c. 1194-95.]

Therefore, the Labour party wanted to ensure that there was a full revaluation in 1985-86. If the hon. Gentleman feels that it was only on the Conservative Benches that there was a desire for revaluation, he should remember the facts stated by the hon. Member for Garscadden.

Mr. Lambie: The hon. Gentleman cannot have been listening to what I said, because I made that point. The hon. Gentleman has been trying to make that intervention since half past five, but no other hon. Member would let him in. I have given him the chance because, like me, he is an eccentric and he does not bow down whenever the whip is cracked.

The right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart), who unfortunately is not present, spoke about an article in a recent edition of the Glasgow *Evening Times* by Desmond White, the chairman of the Celtic football club. He outlined the serious problems facing the ratepayers of Scotland. He drew attention to the anomaly in the rating of football grounds in England and Scotland. The present rateable value of Ibrox park, the home of Glasgow Rangers, is £176,250, and Celtic park has a valuation of £120,750. However, the Manchester United ground, which includes a substantial restaurant, has a rateable value of only £37,000, and Arsenal has one of £30,500. I might be accused of distorting the picture by quoting only valuations, and it could be said that I should be quoting the amount of money that the clubs actually pay, but Mr. Desmond White points out that the Glasgow club paid almost £50,000 more in rates in 1984-85 than Manchester United, a club with approximately two and a half times Celtic's income.

Mr. Dewar: My hon. Friend will remember that when we debated the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act, we received an assurance from the Minister that, by virtually abolishing the contractor's principle and allowing comparability with England when there was not sufficient local comparable property, the problem could be cured. Unless the Minister fails to live up to his advertisement, there is now no differential between English and Scottish grounds under the new valuation law.

Mr. Lambie: I am glad that my hon. Friend has made that point.

Desmond White wrote a similar article in a Scottish newspaper at about the time we debated the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act. He again wrote

[Mr. Lambie]

to Scottish Members of Parliament on this subject. I replied that I thought that he and all the other football clubs in Scotland were being conned into accepting the assurance given by the Secretary of State for Scotland that the Act would deal with these anomalies. That Act has not dealt with the anomalies, and from the figures that I am quoting it is clear that the anomalies are greater than they have ever been because of the effects of the 1985 revaluation.

Mr. Ancram: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman wants to be accurate in what he says. He will be aware that, as a result of revaluation, a number of Scottish football grounds, including Parkhead and Hampden, will pay less in rates this year than they did in 1984-85. As for comparability, he will also be aware that the legislation provided that it could be done during the course of an appeal.

Mr. Lambie: We are discussing the anomalies in valuations which have always existed between properties in Scotland and similar properties in England and Wales. We are not discussing whether they paid more last year or are paying more this year. Glasgow Celtic is paying £50,000 more this year than Manchester United is paying for much better facilities and on the basis of a greater income.

Desmond White makes the valid point that he is concerned not just about the anomalies between similar places in Scotland and in England; he is also dealing with what he considers to be the special case of Scotland. He says:

"If the Government wished an immediate partial solution it could very well drop the requirement that the Scottish local authorities require to pay 44 per cent. of their total expenditure to a figure of 40 per cent. This would have the immediate effect of reducing the rate burden of everyone north of the border by approximately 10 per cent."

If the Government had tabled an order to increase the rate support grant in Scotland by 4 per cent., every ratepayer—not only those whom the hon. Member for Stirling was discussing earlier but thousands of my constituents who are ratepayers—would benefit to the tune of 10 per cent. I put it to the Government and their supporters that the problem has been accentuated by the 1985 revaluation. The real problem is the continuing reduction in the rate support grant to Scottish local authorities.

Between 1977 and 1981 — the period of the last Labour Government running into the first two years of the present Conservative Administration — the amount of local government expenditure paid by the Government was 68·5 per cent. In the orders that we have debated—and, unfortunately, passed by a majority — this year the amount paid by the Government to Scottish local authorities has been reduced to 56·6 per cent. of relevant expenditure. That is where the real problem arises. Unless the Government increase the rate support grant to local authorities, we shall never deal fairly with Scotland's ratepayers.

I am disturbed that we are spending the time of the House, as we have on similar orders in the past, discussing this problem when the people whom I represent were telling me last weekend that we should be discussing unemployment in Scotland. The latest unemployment figures were published at the end of last week. In my constituency, every third man is now unemployed, and, of those who are unemployed, every second one has now been unemployed for more than a year and in many cases for more than two years. That is the problem that the House should be discussing, and it is the problem that my constituents would like the House, Scottish Members especially, to discuss instead of wasting our time tinkering with the effects of a system which should have been altered years ago.

All those hon. Members who have spoken so far have concluded their comments by saying what they thought was the real solution to the reform of the rating system. The only way in which to solve the problem of the rating system in Scotland quickly and fairly is to introduce a 100 per cent. Government grant. The days of the traditional idea of local democracy have gone. Local people can no longer pursue policies opposed to those of the Government. That is true to some extent even of Labour Governments. We cannot go back to the good old days before local government reorganisation. If we were to introduce a 100 per cent. Government grant for relevant local authority expenditure, we should have no more debates on the rating system in Scotland. Moreover, the people of Scotland would not have to face rates increases and we would be able to deal with the immediate problem of mass unemployment.

9.20 pm

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): We all know that the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) has consistently opposed anything to do with the rating system. He is one of the few hon. Members—perhaps the only one—who did not think that we should go through with the 1985 revaluation. These matters are of considerable importance to unemployment. High rates hurt unemployment. That fact should never be lost sight of, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will encourage his friends in local government to keep it in mind.

I welcome the Bill because it gives direct help to ratepayers who are most severely affected by the revaluation. It gives a full rebate to those whose valuation has been increased three times. That, combined with previous measures to give an eightfold increase in domestic rate relief, has gone a long way to reduce the effects of revaluation on ratepayers. The problem is that there are wide variations, even within districts, and to talk about averages is dangerous. However, as revaluation would affect domestic ratepayers more severely this year, the increase in relief has been of great help.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend has introduced a Bill to deal with wildly increased valuations, but many ratepayers — possibly most — will face substantially increased rates bills. The best thing about the Bill is that it highlights the fact that it is not revaluation but the spending policies of local authorities that determines the size of most ratepayers' bills. Rate increases in my constituency could have been within the rate of inflation if it had not been for the spending policies of local authorities, especially Fife regional council. The product of 10 years of Labour effort in Fife regional council is that the area has gone from being one of the lowest rated in Scotland to one of the highest.

What have the Liberals done to help to produce that result? They have not even voted for the last four budgets of Fife regional council. They were content literally to sit on their hands when these crucial votes were taken. The

Liberals were prepared to allow a 20 per cent. rates increase to be imposed on Fife ratepayers, when on average the increase could have been only 2 per cent. if they had voted at the right time. The cost of spending beyond guidelines by Fife regional council is hitting our ratepayers to the tune of 8p in the pound—interestingly enough, exactly the same amount in the pound that was provided by my right hon. Friend to help domestic ratepayers who were affected by the results of revaluation.

Although the Liberals are far from perfect, I must congratulate north-east Fife district council, under its Liberal administration, on keeping its expenditure within guidelines. However, if one removes the effect of the rate support grant distribution formula, about which I should have had a few things to say to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland if I had had more time, one sees that in one year the Liberal council in north-east Fife has increased the rates by twice as much as the Conservative council increased them in the previous four years. It does not, therefore, have a perfect record, either.

The Labour party has tried to suggest that it is the Government's policies which have caused the substantial rates increases. Local authority expenditure is still higher than it was in 1978-79. The measures taken by my right hon. Friend represent a tiny reduction in rate support grant distribution, but a substantial increase in the direct help that is given to ratepayers. This means that total central taxpayer support for local government is no less than it was last year. Most of it has gone towards providing direct help for hard-pressed ratepayers. Therefore, I warmly welcome the Bill. I very much look forward to the proposals for fundamental reform which we are told can be expected at the end of the year.

9.27 pm

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): I have no doubt that the speech of the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) will go down well in the *East Fife Mail*. However, the Bill has to be viewed in the context of the announcement by the Secretary of State for Social Services this afternoon: that many more Scottish people will have to pay rates because of the changes that are to be made in the housing benefits system.

When he introduced the Bill, the Secretary of State for Scotland outlined some of the problems which followed the 1985 revaluation because of the shifting of the rates burden among the various sectors. My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) is not so eccentric as he makes out. It was the first time that I have heard him admit that he might be eccentric. I knew that to be the case with the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), but my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South has his head screwed on the right way. He knows that because the Secretary of State for Scotland cut back on rate support grant during the last five or six years, many revaluation difficulties have been created with which the right hon. Gentleman is now faced. The right hon. Gentleman went too far over the last cut-back in rate support grant. That is why the revaluation exercise upon which he embarked has come back to him with a vengeance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that about £1 billion had been taken by central Government during the last five years from local authority services. There was a clear problem of hardship for many small businesses. We should remember the different categories in the commercial sector. We heard earlier about the tourist industry and the importance of hotels, and we have discussed the problems of shops, although less reference was made to offices. Many small businesses face real hardship as a result of the sudden upsurge in their fixed costs arising from the revaluation exercise, compounded by the reduction in rate support grant. Those problems were especially acute in the Borders and in Dumfries and Galloway, and many problems emerged in Central region, Strathclyde and Lothian.

Last month, I wrote to the Secretary of State asking for clarification about the amount of take-up under the scheme, because the evidence suggested that it would be nothing like the £50 million that has been allocated. The National Federation of the Self-Employed and Small Businesses, after conducting a survey of its members, reckoned that, of the £40 million for the commercial sector, the take-up might be about £22 million.

The self-employed, who represent about one tenth of the work force, have become a significant sector of the economy. The Secretary of State was right to recognise the special hardships that would be caused to many of the self-employed. It was in the context of those figures that my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden assured the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland last month that there was no statutory machinery whereby the Government could assist people in this predicament. My hon. Friend had every right to expect that the Scottish Office would do its homework and get the figures right. I wonder whether the Secretary of State would have got such ecstatic applause at the Tory party conference in Perth——

Mr. Dewar: He did not. It was loyal applause.

Mr. Craigen: My hon. Friend points out that it was loyal applause. Indeed, my hon. Friend got the ecstatic applause on at least two occasions, when the Secretary of State said that the Opposition would help the Government with the passage of the legislation. I was about to suggest that the Secretary of State would have got a slow handclap if the delegates at Perth had known what we now know about the way in which it appears the scheme will operate.

Scotland has been allocated £50 million, and we wish to ensure that we get that £50 million for the benefit of Scottish ratepayers. I know that in Committee we shall have the support of the hon. Members for Banff and Buchan and for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) and the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) in making a useful amendment by varying the threshold so that the whole £50 million is taken up.

Preliminary work in Dumfries and Galloway suggests that a change in material circumstances could be a factor in some properties going over the 300 per cent. threshold. This is where the appeals machinery comes in. Will there be a shortfall as a result of successful appeals? We shall have two problems of take-up. One will be caused by the 300 per cent. threshold and the other will be caused by the unquantifiable number of appeals.

The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) must have held a constituency surgery on Friday, because he spelt out a number of anomalies in the new scheme. I can imagine a Maryhill ratepayer asking me, " How is it that the man next door will get relief because his valuation has gone up 320 per cent. and he had central heating put in last year,

[Mr. Craigen]

but my valuation has gone up 299 per cent. and I am getting nothing?" My answer will be, "Speak to the Secretary of State for Scotland."

The Secretary of State mentioned the cash flows of local authorities. I met representatives of COSLA recently and they were apprehensive about the delays that may result from people holding back until they see how the scheme works. Cash flow problems will inevitably lead to higher interest charges for local authorities. I am glad that the Secretary of State seems to be coming round to the idea that it would be administratively more convenient if, instead of shoals of letters being sent to rating authorities, those authorities identified the people who should qualify under the scheme. The Secretary of State expressed caution about a letter-writing campaign, but can he tell us how soon people will know when the scheme will come into operation? The scheme will depend on the statutory instrument that is to follow the primary legislation. Therefore, there will be a period of considerable uncertainty while people are expecting a benefit.

New St. Andrew's house will be relieved of the responsibility, but I suspect that the computers of quite a few rating authorities will get overheated while trying to identify who will benefit from the new system. I suspect that many people will be disappointed when they find out how much they are to get from the new system. We are talking only about the margin over 300 per cent., and some figures that I have seen suggest that there may be some relatively small rebates, particularly for domestic ratepayers.

I have a continuing curiosity as to which chairman of a Conservative party constituency organisation will benefit most from the scheme. After all, it is open-ended. We know that it is not Fordell castle. However, it will be interesting to see who benefits most from the scheme, on the domestic side.

I should like the Minister to clarify a point that the Secretary of State made about the guidelines. Am I right in thinking that the administrative costs of the scheme, as presently intended, will not affect local authority guidelines? It would be ironic if the Scottish Office, which has so bungled this £50 million relief scheme, yet is in charge of a £3·4 billion local authority budget in Scotland as a whole and exercises rate-capping powers over the 65 local authorities, created a situation which meant that some of them got into trouble in the operation of the small scheme and the administrative charges that are to be imposed on the local authorities.

The Opposition hope that the Government will come round to the idea of accepting the administrative costs for the scheme — in other words, reimbursing the rating authorities for the costs and the payments that will be made under the scheme. Moreover, I wonder whether we shall get a value-for-money scheme. It will be quite a costly exercise. Clearly, the less that is spent on its administration, the more that will be available to benefit ratepayers.

I notice from recent parliamentary answers that the Minister has given to me that the cost of rates collection in Scotland as a whole is only 1 per cent. of the total amount collected, which next year is estimated to be £1·6 billion. I wonder whether this scheme will cost just 1 per cent. of the £50 million. I suspect that it will be fairly costly. When does the Minister expect the regulations to be introduced under the scheme? Although we shall touch on these matters on Report on Wednesday, it is essential that we get some idea of when the regulations will come into force.

The Opposition wish to give the Bill a proper launch. We were a bit apprehensive over the past few weeks at some of the uncertain noises emerging from the Scottish Office about whether the scheme would capsize before it was properly afloat. On Wednesday, our aim will be to make it an improved measure. As my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden has said, it is a rough justice scheme. It will generate a postbag full of anomalies and complaints. I hope that they will find their way to the Secretary of State.

I cannot but conclude that more Scottish ratepayers will be disappointed by the scheme and at their exclusion from it than will benefit from its introduction. The Secretary of State probably knows this, but he may expect little thanks from those who will be assisted, because the relief that they obtain under the scheme will probably be less then they bargained for much less than they were led to expect.

I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will spend a little time explaining the intricacies of the scheme in relation to commercial ratepayers. They rightly feel considerable consternation about how the scheme will operate. They would like to know why the threshold cannot be brought down below the 300 per cent. mark.

9.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): On 17 April this year during Question Time the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said:

"In respect of the commercial ratepayer, the Minister"—

I believe that he was referring to me—

"has managed to give the impression that the only factor stopping help for at least those hardest hit is the lack of any statutory machinery for doing so."—[*Official Report*, 17 April 1985; Vol. 77, c. 255.]

I assure the hon. Gentleman that if he wishes to create that statutory machinery the Government will give that measure every facility and speed it through the House. The Bill provides that machinery and fulfils the commitment made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to provide a mechanism to bring exceptional relief to commercial and domestic ratepayers, who, as my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) rightly said, have been hardest hit by the effect of revaluation. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) says that those who have not been helped by it will be disappointed. I am sure that when the hon. Member for Garscadden was offering help to the hardest hit he appreciated that those people would be at the top of the scale.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has outlined how the scheme will work. In a sense, the Bill gives us the power to grant relief to domestic and commercial ratepayers in the circumstances outlined. It defines the class of ratepayer who will be eligible for such relief and the trigger of that eligibility. To that extent it fulfils the wish of the hon. Member for Garscadden, and I look forward to his co-operation during the remaining stages of the legislation. The speeches of the hon. Members for Garscadden and Maryhill tended to give a slightly new meaning to the word "co-operation".

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman is being a little less than gracious. If he wished a withdrawal of co-operation, we could happily have promised him several months of consideration in Committee. We have not done that.

Mr. Ancram: I think that the hon. Gentleman is aware of what I mean. In terms of welcoming this machinery, some of the points that he raised were not as gracious as he might have liked them to be.

During the past few weeks the Opposition parties have been delighted to take advantage of what they have seen as a politically disruptive situation in Scotland. In political terms, I find it hard to criticise them for that. It is interesting to look at their record. I was interested to see tonight that the Liberals had decided to send forward not the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who believes that any help to ratepayers is a warped priority, but an hon. Member who believes that helping ratepayers is a priority — the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). It never ceases to amaze me how the Liberal party, with its small numbers, always seems to have a man for all seasons.

I believe that we were all delighted to hear the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) tell us that, as a Scottish nationalist, he wished the position in England to be identical to that in Scotland. We welcome his conversion to unionism, which we have long been pressing on him.

Mr. Donald Stewart: I merely expressed the view that I did not want to see that. I spoke about the appalling anomalies between the assessments in the two areas.

Mr. Ancram: If the right hon. Gentleman reads the *Official Report* tomorrow, he will find that he called on the Government to ensure that the positions were similar. He neatly avoided the fact that, on 28 July 1982, the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) pronounced these exciting words:

"There is nothing wrong with revaluation. In fact, there is much to be gained from it."

I have listened with interest to some of the criticisms that his party has made since then about revaluation. — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) points out that the SDP is not represented tonight. I did not mention that because it happens with such regularity that it is not worth commenting upon.

I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Garscadden said. He rightly pointed out that during the debate on 28 July 1982 he called for a full revaluation this year. He said:

"The Minister should make it clear now that there will be no more flirting with this halfway house"—

that is, partial revaluation—

"and parboiled non-solution. He should tell us that there will be a proper revaluation in 1985-86."—[*Official Report*, 28 July 1982; Vol. 28, c. 1195-97.]

The hon. Gentleman placed no qualification on that. He did not say that we had to provide mechanisms to bring relief to those who might be hardest hit by revaluation.

The hon. Gentleman may say that he did not expect the sort of multipliers that have occurred during revaluation. If that was the reason why he was so keen to have a full revaluation without any qualifications, I must tell him that that does not hold water. When his party was in government, it experienced revaluation in 1978-79. He may remember the multipliers on that occasion — the domestic multiplier was 2·8, the industrial multiplier was 4·2, the commercial multiplier 4·1, and the category described as others 4·9. Therefore, the overall revaluation average multiplier was 3·6.

What happened under the Labour Government to relieve the ratepayers' suffering because of the multipliers? Precisely nothing, other than that the domestic relief element of the rate support grant was reduced by 75 per cent. It is interesting to note the Labour party's new-found support for the ratepayers whom it was not prepared to help when it was in charge of revaluation in 1978.

The hon. Member for Garscadden will never concede that any of the rating effects this year have been due to overspending by councils. I wish to put a serious question to him. He spoke earlier about the effects of RSG reductions. He knows that both I and my right hon. Friend have spoken about the effect on rates of overspending throughout Scotland. There is one example that he cannot ignore, and that is the one mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) about Edinburgh district council, which, by its own hand and by its spending decisions, has increased its rate poundage by almost 80 per cent. He knows full well the direct effect that that will have on ratepayers in Edinburgh, both domestic and commercial.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take this opportunity to tell the House whether he supports that council's spending decision, and whether the report in today's *Glasgow Herald* that the executive council of the Scottish Labour party has sent messages of support to the council is correct.

Mr. Fairbairn: I can give my hon. Friend one good example of Edinburgh's rating policy. Jenners has a turnover which is 500 times less than that of Harrods, but has to pay to Edinburgh district council twice the rates.

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. I am disappointed that, once again, the hon. Member for Garscadden has failed to answer my question about rating reform.

A number of specific questions were asked by hon. Members, and I shall do my best to answer them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East, in an intervention during my right hon. Friend's speech, asked whether clause 2(2) could be used selectively in terms of the authorities to whom the rebate is paid on a future occasion. My answer is no. The subsection is drafted so that that cannot happen.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked whether we would consider paying the rating authorities some of their reimbursement "up front", as I think he put it. The Bill provides for flexibility in our repayment, and I should like to consider what evidence would be acceptable for making some early payment to the rating authorities before an audited certified claim can be prepared.

The hon. Member asked about disabled persons' relief, and I think he appreciated that I was not altogether clear about it. I am still puzzled as to how it can arise. If the hon. Gentleman will write to me about it, I shall look into the matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) asked about mines and quarries. *[Interruption.]* I shall deal later with what hon. Members call shortfall. Quarries are formula-valued and will not qualify for relief under the measure.

[Mr. Ancram]

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland asked about the whisky industry. As he knows, whisky distilling is manufacturing and benefits from industrial derating. Thus again, under the Bill as drafted, the industry will not qualify for relief.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), together with my hon. Friends the Members for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) and Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), rightly pointed out that the lesson of the revaluation has been in underlining the anomalies and iniquities in the present system. Those have been highlighted by the revaluation, and that is precisely why the Government have been looking, for some years now, for a better way of financing local government.

I must say to the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) that the suggestion that we are being panicked into a solution or are rushing to find one has to be judged against the vast amount of work that has been done in this regard in the last Parliament and since November last year. It remains our intention to produce in the near future proposals which we believe will be acceptable as a better and fairer system of financing local government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde asked about the problems of market gardening. Market gardens other than the house are generally treated as agricultural subjects and therefore do not appear in the valuation roll. Obviously I cannot comment on a particular case, but if there is any doubt obviously the occupant should appeal in circumstances such as those mentioned.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) asked why there was to be a delay of two months before the measure was brought into force. The answer is that it is not needed before that. The order can be laid and debated immediately. If Royal Assent is given in June, we would have that order by the summer recess. That would be in plenty of time for the authorities to make payments of the rebate before the due time when the rate bills have to be paid.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling asked several questions, and I may have to write to him on some of them. With regard to fishing, if there is a separate entry in the new roll for a fishing beat which can be matched against a similar entry in the old roll, the property can possibly qualify, but if the beats have been amalgamated or divided between the two rolls there can be no comparison and thus no rebate.

With regard to change of use from industrial to commercial purposes, there has to be a comparison between lands and heritage before and after revaluation. If there is a difference of a kind to which my hon. Friend points, there will not be matching entries in the old and new rolls, and therefore there will be no rebate.

Several hon. Members asked about the amounts of money involved. The scheme was devised by looking for a multiplier which we believed would deal with the harshest cases arising from revaluation and the effects on rate bills. The figure that we chose, which is very much in line with the figures for domestic relief which I quoted for 1978-79, was a multiplier of three. It is not easy to calculate how much that will cost, as hon. Members have realised. I believe that we shall not know the full answer to that question until all those who are eligible have been paid.

The Bill fulfils the commitment that my right hon. Friend made to the House in his recent statement. It is good for Scottish ratepayers, and I call on the House to support it.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Committee tomorrow.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Family Law (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. *—[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

RATING (REVALUATION REBATES) (SCOTLAND) BILL [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of the expenses of the Secretary of State in paying rating authorities amounts equal to the total amounts of rebates granted by them under the Act.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Family Law (Scotland) Bill [*Lords*]

As amended *(in the Standing Committee)*, considered.

Clause 8

ORDERS FOR FINANCIAL PROVISION

10.1 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 6, line 20, at end insert—

'(2A) An order under subsection (1)*(a)* for the transfer of heritable property from one spouse to the other which is made by the court shall have no effect in relation to third parties transacting with the spouse against whom the order has been made unless it is registered in the Register of Inhibitions and Adjudications within fourteen days from the date on which it is made.'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 6, in clause 14, page 12, line 41, at end insert—

'(4A) An order under subsection (2)*(d)* which is made by the court shall not affect dealings relating to the former matrimonial home by the non-applicant spouse with third parties acting in good faith unless such order is registered in the Register of Inhibitions and Adjudications within fourteen days from the date on which it is made.'.

Mr. Dewar: We come to what is on the face of it a fairly dry piece of law reform. I am not sure that I shall do anything to dispel that impression in the next 10 minutes or so. I am equally confident that the Solicitor-General will rise to a similar high standard when it is his turn to speak. This is a matter of some importance. I approach it with a good deal of caution because, although I am occasionally given to flamboyant claims of my expertise and virtue, I have never prided myself upon my knowledge of conveyancing law. A few obscure fragments are lodged in my memory. They have something to do with a mysterious Act which reached the statute book in——

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): 1924.

Mr. Dewar: Yes. The sight of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) and I discussing conveyancing must be quaint and strange.

These two amendments to comparatively simple matters in terms of principle, although the complexities would puzzle someone with a great deal more expertise than myself. We are considering clause 8. Most hon. Members will be aware that clause 8(1)*(a)* deals with the transfer of property between spouses. That is when, in an action for divorce, there is an application to the court for an order to transfer property.

Clause 8(1)*(c)* relates to an incidental order. It is defined, as hon. Members will be aware, in clause 14. Clause 14(2)*(d)* and *(e)* refer to incidental orders which, among other things, may regulate occupancy rights or outgoings of the former matrimonial home. This is an unashamedly difficult subject for me and somewhat confused.

The first problem is that there has been some sort of clash or competition between an incidental order under clause 14 and occupancy rights which are awarded under section 3 of the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981. That will to some extent be clarified by Government amendment No. 5. I had tabled amendments to the same end, but I shall give way to the Government's formulation. I am grateful to the Solicitor-General for having listened to the arguments that came largely from the Law Society of Scotland and the professions and which were reflected by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing), who raised the matter in Committee.

I understand that once the Government amendment has been incorporated there will be a fairly neat demarcation, and occupancy rights under the 1981 Act will run to the point of divorce and will then, to use the fashionable term, fly off. If there is any need for the enforcement of occupancy rights thereafter, it will have to be pursued through an incidental order under clause 14. That will arise only at or after the point of divorce. I hope that that is clear to those who are following the debate.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): No.

Mr. Dewar: I know that my hon. Friend is an honest trier and is not usually terribly discouraged by failing to understand what is happening. I look forward to one or more of his rumbustious speeches during the course of our exchanges.

I turn now to the real issue behind the amendment, which is directed to how the new provisions will work. I am not clear about the way in which they will operate and their operation has not been explained to me by any of those learned in the law whom I have consulted. It is as plain as the nose on my face—it could not be much plainer than that—that the courts can make an order enforcing a transfer between the spouses. The timing is referred to in clause 12. The court can order that the transfer takes place on the granting of a decree of divorce or

"within such period as the court on granting decree of divorce may specify."

Even taking into account the provisions in clause 12, I presume that there will have to be a disposition. I presume that a formal document will be signed by the spouses transferring the property, which ultimately will give a good title that will be recorded in the register of sasines. I do not know how long it takes these days successfully to record a deed in the register, but I am told that it takes many months. I have been told that there can be a time lag of as long as nine months. I was rather surprised when I was told—this shows how much I am out of touch—that the delay when land registration is involved can be as long as 18 months. That period can elapse before the new title is properly registered and, therefore, available for public inspection, or at least to the eye of a searcher who may be carrying out an examination on behalf of a prospective purchaser.

If there is such a substantial gap between application and registration it has been suggested to me that a dishonest spouse may try to defeat the transfer by selling to a third party. How can the third party be expected to be aware of the fact that there is an order under clause 8(1)*(a)* in existence, which will presumably prevent the third party from getting a good title?

The amendment suggests that when an order is made by the court under clause 8(1)*(a)* there should be a duty upon the parties—presumably upon the grantee, the person who will receive the property—within 14 days to register the order in the register of inhibitions and adjudications. If the grantee fails to do so, the theory is—I hope that it holds good in practice—that the third party sale would go ahead and would not be affected adversely by the existence of a section 8(1)*(a)* order.

[Mr. Dewar]

I hope that this issue has been explained reasonably clearly. I an sure that the Solicitor-General for Scotland follows it. Indeed, there has been some correspondence between us on these issues prior to the debate.

Obviously, the Bill complicates conveyancing, but complication will undoubtedly abound in this matter. That is the fault of the House. For sufficiently good reasons we try to get more sensible property laws on the break-up of a marriage, and in so doing we complicate the life of a conveyancer in Scottish legal practice. If, for example, a wife were to get the transfer of the house, her legal adviser failed to register the order in the register of inhibitions and adjudications, alienation took place and a third party bought in good faith because there had been no registration in the register of inhibitions and adjudications, the third party sale could not be overturned, and presumably there would be a nice action for professional negligence against the solicitor. Perhaps I should not be laying up such a store of trouble for my colleagues, and who knows what the future holds for me?

There is common sense in the proposal, and great danger in leaving the position in the somewhat unsatisfactory state in which a clause 8(1)*(a)* order may be made, the complicated and laborious conveyancing process may be in hand, and there is an apparent transaction with a third party, such as I have described. That is the simple part of the story.

Amendment No. 6 deals with the same sort of point in connection with incidental orders, to which I referred earlier. They are the orders made under clause 8(1)*(c)* and further defined in clause 14. Clause 15(3) states:

"Neither an incidental order, nor any rights conferred by such an order, shall prejudice any rights of any third party insofar as those rights existed immediately before the making of the order."

That seems to be conclusive, but I am not entirely sure that it is. I hope that the Minister can help me on that.

If an incidental order confers on one spouse occupancy rights and the entitled spouse sells the property to a bona fide third party and, therefore, there is competition about which occupancy rights take precedence and are preferred, what is the position?

Some time ago the Minister wrote me a complicated letter—I do not complain about that—which to some extent deals with the problem. It would be convenient if he would summarise the letter and incorporate it in his speech. He stated:

"The bill as introduced sought to protect the right to occupy a matrimonial home under a court order by providing that provisions of sections 6, 7 and 8 of the 1981 Act should apply. That would have meant that the right to occupy would automatically prevail over the rights of third parties who acquired right to the property."

That was the position in the Bill as originally drafted. Sections 6, 7 and 8 of the 1981 legislation were imported into the Bill. That made it clear that in those circumstances an incidental order would prevail over a sale to a third party.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Did I understand the hon. Gentleman to say that he expects the answer of the Solicitor-General for Scotland to be even more complicated than the hon. Gentleman's question to him?

Mr. Dewar: I fear that that may be so, but we must wait with bated breath. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has followed the question with his usual——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Perspicacity.

Mr. Dewar: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). The point, before I lose my thread, is that the position as outlined was perfectly clear as the Bill was originally drafted.

10.15 pm

However, the Minister goes on, fairly, to point out that sections 6, 7 and 8 are no longer imported into the Bill because there were amendments. Therefore, the clear position that there will be an automatic preference over the rights of third parties is presumably undermined. The Minister makes that point, but goes on to say:

"This does not of course mean that the person who is given the right to occupy is left without protection. The court in a divorce action could be asked in advance by the spouse to protect her right to occupy against adverse dealings in addition to its common law powers and the specific power to interdict avoidance transactions under clause 18 the court has a very wide power under clause 14(2)*(k)* to make any ancillary order which is expedient to give effect to its orders. Thus the court could, having regard to these various powers, interdict the former husband from disposing of, or otherwise dealing with, the house while the right to occupy lasts."

As I understand what the Minister is saying—I hope that we have this clear in our minds—it means that as the Bill was originally drafted, it was quite clear that an incidental order regulating occupancy rights took precedence over any sale of a property to a bona fide third party. The situation has now been thrown into the melting pot, but that preference for the occupancy rights could still be re-established if an application were made to the courts to use their powers to interdict the husband from disposing or otherwise dealing in the property, thus settling the matter by that specific court order and provision.

That may be satisfactory enough, but there may be many occasions when the court is not invited—perhaps through inadvertence or because it was not thought necessary—to use those additional powers to make that specific order. The question still arises about what would happen in that situation, where the powers under clause 14(2)*(k)* have not been called into play. It seems to me that we are left with a somewhat doubtful query, where the clear superiority of the incidental order no longer automatically prevails and where that position has not been put right by some specific and special order of the court.

In that situation, amendment No. 6 comes into play and commends itself, at least to me, as a perfectly sensible idea. The House will remember that amendment No. 6 states that unless there is a registration of the incidental order

"in the Register of Inhibitions and Adjudications within fourteen days",

the preference in any competition of occupancy rights will go to the third party who has purported to buy in good faith. That is sensible and clarifies the situation. Although the Minister has rejected the argument in his letter, I hope that he will be prepared to look at the matter again.

One of our difficulties—I say this with regret, but there is nothing we can do about it—is that the Bill began its journey in another place. Therefore, it is now at the end of its parliamentary passage. So often in this House we are able to say, "Ah, but the Government can take this away, think about it and put it right later." On this occasion we must put it right tonight. There is no doubt that there is great anxiety, particularly among the legal profession. That was eloquently expressed by Mr.

Graham, president of the Law Society of Scotland, who corresponded with the Secretary of State about the Bill. He said in a letter dated 16 May:

"The Council is convinced that unless the Bill is radically amended in relation to certain of its provisions, it is likely to have the effect of bringing the conveyancing process in relation to domestic property to a virtual standstill."

In fairness, I ought to say that part of the Law Society's anxiety has been met by the neat demarcation which will be put into the Bill via Government amendment No. 5. Therefore, I do not suggest that the amendments I am proposing are essentially what is referred to in Mr. Graham's serious suggestion. I know from my personal contact with the Law Society that it feels strongly that my amendments will sensibly clarify the position. I hope that, even at this late stage, the Minister will be prepared to turn his mind seriously to them rather than accepting the fait accompli and saying that there is no room for further movement.

I recognise that I have spoken at some length on this matter and that I may have confused myself and the House. However, I have tried to make a serious point and to put across a genuine difficulty, as it is seen by many people who have to deal on a daily basis with our conveyancing system. I hope that the Minister will be prepared to look at what has been said, and the arguments that have been advanced.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I do not intend to follow the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) through the maze in which he took us, although we were all impressed by his ability to steer us into it. Whether he got us out of it is another matter. I do not intend to show my ignorance of these matters. It is many years since I did conveyancing and I shall not pretend that my knowledge is sufficient to allow me to speak with expertise.

As the hon. Member for Garscadden elaborated his case, certain memories of what happened during the formulation of the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981 came back. The notice of warning to conveyancers and their clients first emerged then. Court orders that might have an effect on the heritable property were granted. However, nothing was available to warn everybody of what might be happening. I take it that this is what the hon. Member for Garscadden has been developing in the debate on this Bill.

During the proceedings on the 1981 legislation, the Government had the opportunity to consider amendments that sought to make greater use of the register of inhibitions and adjudications, but turned down that solution on cost grounds. My readings of outpourings thereafter in various legal journals showed me that the profession was concerned that the Government, by bypassing the register, had made life more complicated. The great advantage of the register is that it gives an immediate warning of what might be happening. It is not subject to the delays that can be encountered in the register of sasines.

I was struck by what the hon. Member for Garscadden said about delays. He spoke about nine months for a return of deeds duly recorded, and suggested that that might become worse under the new land registration procedures. In the days when I practised, six months was considered to be excessive, but it takes that length of time before any property can show up on the searches. During that period, many difficulties in the transfer of the property can occur.

In view of the complexity about which we have been talking, the fact that a greater number of people own their houses than did so a few years ago and the existence of the register of inhibitions and adjudications, why have the Government not thought of making better use of that register? It could be used to give fairly speedy notice to third parties and others that a problem might emerge. The register can give a reply quickly and it does not involve the technicality of registering deeds in the register of sasines. It always seemed strange that the Government should introduce new matrimonial provisions concerning the disposal of property in the most complicated way.

If there is a simple way, we should try to follow it. Regardless of the argument powerfully deplored by the hon. Member for Garscadden—who knows his stuff, because none of us could follow it—would it not be desirable to try to make life as simple as possible? If these registers exist, they should be utilised. I do not believe that the cost would be all that great. In view of this amendment and thinking back to the 1981 Act, I recommend to the Minister that greater use should be made of those registers.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): Although both amendments cover much the same ground, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) will appreciate that in one sense they cover rather different areas although the remedies proposed by them are similar.

The Government have sympathy with the objective of securing sufficient protection in the Bill against the disposal by the defender of property which is the subject of an order for transfer under clause 8. In the light of the representations received from the Law Society, we have considered carefully how far such additional protection is necessary or readily practicable.

It is necessary to be clear about the nature of an order for the transfer of property. As the Bill stands, this is simply a personal order against one party requiring him or her to convey that property to another party. In itself, such an order cannot affect the rights of third parties. It is only after the property has been conveyed that the transferee acquires a real right to it. Therefore, there is no need for a specific provision that the order shall not affect the rights of third parties.

The real question is whether there is sufficient provision to protect the interests of the person to whom it is proposed the property should be transferred against dealings with a third party before it is conveyed. It is my view that the existing powers available to the court under the Bill and at common law should be adequate and that it would not be justifiable to provide in addition a specific statutory requirement for the registration of orders for the transfer of property.

Given the careful way in which the hon. Member for Garscadden advanced his argument, it might be helpful if I explained these powers.

A defender who disposed of property in defiance of a court order for transfer could be punished for contempt of court. Under clause 14(2)(*k*), or clause 18, he could also be expressly interdicted from disposing of the property and punished for his breach of interdict. Most importantly, the transferor could be inhibited from disposing of the property. Clause 19 would enable a person applying for a transfer order, whether pursuer or defender in the divorce action, to obtain "on cause shown" warrant for inhibition on the dependence of the action, and such inhibition would

[The Solicitor-General for Scotland]

remain in force until the order for transfer was implemented. If a party had not obtained inhibition on the dependence of the action, he could still obtain warrant for inhibition at common law once the order for transfer of property had been made. Thus, by using the normal machinery of inhibition, the transferee could obtain the effects sought by the amendment, namely, publication to third parties and the setting aside of adverse dealings with such parties.

Given this array of powers available to the court, both at common law and under the Bill, I am not persuaded that there is a clear need for additional protection against avoidance transactions in the form of a statutory scheme of registration. There is also the consideration that a statutory registration requirement would impose considerable additional costs upon the Department of the Registers and would also increase the cost of searches in the register of inhibitions and adjudications and hence increase the cost of conveyancing generally. The delay in Scotland is no small consideration. To require additional work when there is sufficient remedy is undesirable. The Government's view is that it would not be justifiable to provide for the registration of orders for the transfer of property. On that basis, I ask the House to reject the amendment.

10.30 pm

Amendment No. 6 deals with circumstances in which there is what I might, in shorthand, call an occupancy order. It is important that a person who is given the right to occupy the former matrimonial home should be able to protect that right against dealings with third parties. It is also important that third parties who acquire the right to property should not have their rights prejudiced by finding that the property is subject to a right to occupy under a court order of which they have had no opportunity to learn.

The Bill tried originally to protect the right to occupy a matrimonial home under a court order by providing that sections 6, 7 and 8 of the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981 should apply. That would have ensured that the right to occupy would automatically prevail over the rights of third parties who acquired the right to property. The Law Society and the Department of the Registers have represented that that would impose an extremely heavy burden on conveyancers and the keepers of registers. In every transaction concerning residential property they would have to investigate whether a right to occupy under a court order existed. We have concluded that that would be difficult to justify, as there are only a limited number of cases, and other reasonable safeguards are available. On that basis, in Committee we deleted provision for including sections 6, 7 and 8 of the 1981 Act.

The result of that deletion is that court orders regulating the right to occupy the matrimonial home will have effect between the parties to the marriage, but there is no question of their having effect against third parties who acquire right to property in the absence of specific provision to that effect. Thus, third parties will acquire their right to the property free of the right to occupy. They will accordingly need no notice of the protection against that right.

The question is whether the person who is given the right to occupy has the necessary protection. The hon. Member for Garscadden answered the question to some extent. The court in a divorce action could be asked in advance by a spouse to protect his or her right to occupy against adverse dealings. In addition to its common law powers and a specific power to interdict avoidance transactions under clause 18, a court has wide power under clause 14(2)*(k)* to make any ancillary order which is expedient to give effect to its orders.

The court could, having regard to those powers, interdict a husband from disposing of, or otherwise dealing with, the house while the right to occupy lasts. The ex-spouse would be liable to punishment for contempt of court if he or she breached such an interdict. The court could, in appropriate cases, circumvent this problem by ordering the property to be transferred into the joint names of both spouses or into the names of trustees. I refer the hon. Member for Garscadden to the power given in clause 14(2)*(g)*. The Scottish Law Commission mentioned that possibility in its report. I am satisfied that the court has adequate powers to protect the interests of the person who is given the right to occupy.

In Committee I also stated that we would consider strengthening these powers by giving the court power to grant a warrant for inhibition in respect of property which is subject to a court order granting the right to occupy. We have given this matter serious consideration, but have come to the conclusion that it is not desirable to amend the Bill in this respect. Inhibition is a remedy normally available against a creditor in an obligation to pay money or to transfer property against the debtor in that obligation. In this type of case there is no creditor, no debtor and no such obligation. We would thus for the first time be seeking to apply inhibition in a situation where it has not been applied before. It is uncertain how it would apply in these circumstances, and to provide adequately for its application could be extremely complicated.

Another important consideration for those hon. Members who have been so concerned about this long-awaited report on diligence is that we hope it will be soon available. In these circumstances, it would be premature to extend inhibition to an entirely new area in advance of consideration of that report. The hon. Members for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) and for Garscadden referred somewhat tentatively to their experience of this law. I am sure that they recollect all too vividly their university lectures on the problems of future debts in such an area. It is important that on this point we should await the deliberations of the Scottish Law Commission.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): My recollection of warrants for inhibition on the dependence in a consistorial action is that one had to have allegations of the dependence being either vergens ad inopiam or in meditatione fugae. Clause 19 says:

"the court shall have power, on cause shown, to grant warrant for inhibition . . . on the dependence."

Is the Solicitor-General satisfied that the words "on cause shown" extend to causes which might be used to justify such a warrant for inhibition on the dependence beyond the narrow grounds upon which it is currently allowed by the courts?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I compliment the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on his recollection of the Latin tags that have been put on these matters and, indeed, on the warrant which he doubtless put on many summonses during his practice in the courts. I concede that the phrase "on cause shown" is

potentially wider than either the prospect of vergens ad inopiam or in meditatione fugae. Nevertheless, on his more fundamental point, the application of inhibition to future debts is a matter which would be such an innovation in the law of Scotland that at this time its introduction would be undesirable.

The amendment provides that an order giving the right to occupy may be registered in the register of inhibitions and adjudications and that unless it is so registered within 14 days the order shall not affect dealings with third parties. The amendment is not necessary or appropriate, since, as I have sought to explain, under the Bill as drafted the right to occupy would not affect the dealings with third parties. There is therefore no need for a system of publication to give notice of such a right to third parties.

I should add that we have examined in considerable detail whether a system of registration of such orders is desirable. We have come to the conclusion that it is not. To provide adequately for such a system would require quite complex and detailed provision, quite out of proportion to any advantage arising from it. Such a system might also prove too rigid. It would prevent any dealings with the property, although in some cases the court might consider that dealings such as the grant of a security or the sale of surplus ground attaching to the property were reasonable. The arguments against allowing inhibition that I have mentioned would apply also to such a system if its effect were to place inhibition upon the dealings with the property.

For those reasons, which I accept are somewhat complicated and specialised in the law of Scotland, I ask the House to reject this amendment as well as the first amendment.

Mr. Dewar: I do not know whether my colleagues will be satisfied with that reply. Perhaps I watch "Weekend World" too much, but I have got into the habit of recapitulating an argument to make sure that I understand it. I am tempted to do so now, but I am sure that it would show my inadequacies and I shy away from the prospect. Besides, it might try the patience of my hon. Friends.

I understand the Solicitor-General's point about the distinction between the two areas with which the amendments deal. The first is the section 8 order for the transfer of the property between spouses. If there is such an order and the spouse who is transferring decides to sell in defience of the order—one would hope that happens only rarely—he can be punished if there is an inhibition or an interdict to stop that. But assuming that there is not, and an order has been made simpliciter, if he then goes to a third party and says, "If you want a nice house, I will let you have it cheap," and the third party goes to his solicitor who proceeds to buy it in good faith, I wish to be clear about what will happen. Presumably, the sale is invalid because there is a court order. I did not understand the answer to that simple question. Perhaps the Minister will explain it.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The example that the hon. Gentleman gave shows his difficulty. If he has in mind, to adopt the bankruptcy law provisions, a confident and conjunct person, clause 18 deals with orders relating to avoidance transactions, and, in general, the position that he postulates would be covered by the clause.

However, if the court has ordered that the house should be transferred from the husband to the wife, one assumes that, in the ordinary course of events, it will be advertised and there will be an opportunity for potential purchasers to inspect the property. I was trying to explain to the hon. Gentleman that, before the order was granted, the request for inhibition would have been within the action itself. Alternatively, if, subsequent to the decree of divorce, it comes to the attention of the spouse in favour of whom the order has been made that that is what is intended, under common law he or she would have the right to request inhibition from the court. In those circumstances, the hon. Gentleman's anxiety is misplaced, because the opportunity, which exists now, of using the common law powers of inhibition, would be available.

Mr. Dewar: I am grateful to the Minister. It may be that I am making a mountain out of a molehill. I was thinking of the unlikely circumstances in which an order is made under which the husband is bound to transfer the property to the wife, who intends to live in the ex-matrimonial home and bring up the family there. The husband, perhaps cheesed off with the hardness of his fate, may decide to live on the Costa del Sol. He may therefore say to a third party, "I am going to Spain and I want to get rid of the house in a hurry. I will sell it to you." The purchaser then goes to his solicitor and says, "I have arranged to buy the house." Binding arrangements are then entered into, and the transaction goes ahead. However, unbeknown to the purchaser, there is a court order which says that the house must be transferred to the wife.

Of course, if the wife was lucky enough, she could get her hands on the proceeds of the sale, if they were not already in Spain. However, she may not want the money; she may want to live in the house. I am simply asking the Minister what would happen then. Does the third party have a good title, or is the uncompleted order enough to defeat him in his attempts to buy?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: It is always difficult to deal with incomplete examples, but it seems that the more that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) elaborates, the closer he gets to a situation in which the provisions of clause 18 would apply.

If it is anticipated on behalf of the pursuer spouse that the correct way to dispose of the property on divorce is a transfer of property order, it will be appropriate to seek for inhibition then. If that were not done at that stage, it would be appropriate, subsequent to the decree of divorce, to use the approach that is available under common law to seek for letters of inhibition.

10.45 pm

Mr. Dewar: I shall retreat. We shall have an opportunity to read what the Solicitor-General has said, and no doubt those with a particular interest in these matters will do so. I do not know whether they will be consoled.

I do not wish to trespass on the time of the House by dwelling on the second amendment. It is clear that, with the Bill in its present form, the incidental order would not prevail and the third party's rights would be paramount. The question would be: what redress is open to the dispossessed spouse? I am not sure whether such situations will arise. Perhaps the best course is to hope that they will not.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland has looked at the issues closely and I know that he has been pressed hard on

[Mr. Dewar]

them behind the scenes. If he is sure that registration and a register of inhibitions and adjudications would be unnecessary, I must let the matter rest there. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 14

Incidental orders

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 11, line 24, leave out 'An' and insert 'Subject to subsection (2A) below, an'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr Harold Walker): With this, we may take the following: Amendment No. 3, in page 11, line 37 at end insert

'made after the granting of decree of divorce.'

No. 4, in page 11, line 40 at end insert

'made after the granting of decree of divorce'.

Government amendment No. 5.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The amendments are intended to ensure that incidental orders regulating the occupation of the matrimonial home, the use of furniture in it and so on, or regulating liability for outgoings in respect of a matrimonial home may be made only at the date of divorce or thereafter.

The amendments were tabled in response to views first expressed by the Law Society, which suggested that it would be inappropriate for the power to make incidental orders under clause 14(2) *(d)* or *(e)* to be available to the courts while the parties are still married, as disputes about occupancy and furniture arising prior to divorce should be dealt with under the powers conferred by the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981. The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) raised the matter in Committee and the views expressed by him and, in supplement, by the Law Society, seem to be correct.

The Scottish Law Commission said in its report that some of the incidental orders under clause 14 (2) might not be appropriate before divorce and, accordingly, clause 14 (6) would allow the Court of Session to make rules restricting the types of order that may be made before the granting of a divorce. I think that in such cases it would be desirable to have express provision in the statute rather than leave the matter to rules of court.

Opposition amendments Nos. 3 and 4 are designed to achieve the same effect as the Government amendments, but I believe that it is preferable to make separate provision, on the lines of our amendments, than to write the limitations into paragraphs *(d)* and *(e)* of clause 14 (2). The paragraphs relate to the types of orders rather than the times at which they may be made. However, there is only a difference of drafting between us.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 5, in page 12, line 10, at end insert—

'(2A) An incidental order referred to in subsection (2)*(d)* or *(e)* above may be made only on or after the granting of decree of divorce.'.—*[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

Clause 16

AGREEMENTS ON FINANCIAL PROVISION

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 13, line 32 at end insert—

'(2A) Without prejudice to subsections (1) and (2) above, where the parties to a marriage have entered into an agreement as to financial provision to be made on divorce and—

(a) the estate of the party by whom any periodical allowance is payable under the agreement has, since the date when the agreement was entered into, been sequestrated, the award of sequestration has not been recalled and the party has not been discharged;

(b) an analogous remedy within the meaning of section 10(5) of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 has, since that date, come into force and remains in force in respect of that party's estate; or

(c) That party's estate is being administered by a trustee acting under a voluntary trust deed granted since that date by the party for the benefit of his creditors generally or is subject to an analogous arrangement.

the court may, on or at any time after granting decree of divorce, making an order setting aside or varying any term of the agreement relating to the periodical allowance.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 8.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: These amendments are intended to ensure that where a periodical allowance on divorce is payable under a voluntary agreement, it will always be possible for a payer who is bankrupt to apply to the court to vary or set aside the provision for the periodical allowance as may be appropriate in the circumstances. Where a person becomes bankrupt, the trustee in bankruptcy will take possession of almost all his assets and probably a fair proportion of his income. In these new circumstances, the amount of periodical allowance payable by the bankrupt person to his divorced spouse may be quite unrealistic. Where the periodical allowance is payable under a court order, the bankrupt person could apply for the order to be varied or set aside as appropriate under clause 13(4). Where it is payable under agreement, and the agreement provides for variation, he could apply for periodical allowance to be varied or set aside as appropriate under clause 16(1).

It is only in those cases—probably very few—where the agreement does not provide for variation that difficulty could arise. The bankrupt person could find himself liable to an obligation which is already unrealistic in the circumstances, which he has no means of paying and which the other spouse cannot in practice enforce. That is not satisfactory for anyone. It is to allow variation in those few cases that the amendment is proposed.

The additional power to vary would last only—I emphasise this—while the bankruptcy itself lasted. I stress that the amendment merely gives the court a discretion to vary or set aside a periodical allowance. It would not be obliged to do so.

Amendment No. 8 would have the effect of extending clause 16(3) to the new subsection (2A) so that any term of an agreement that purported to exclude the right to apply to the court in circumstances set out in subsection (2A) would be void.

As I have explained, the amendments deal with a problem that should seldom arise, but could cause considerable difficulties if it did. I therefore ask the House to accept them.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 8, in page 13, line 34, after '(1)(*b*)' insert 'or (2A)'. — *[The Solicitor-General for Scotland.]*

10.52 pm

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The main provisions of the Bill achieve a comprehensive reform of the law of aliment, the introduction of statutory principles to be followed by the courts in making orders for financial provisions on divorce, and the clarification of the law relating to property rights and legal capacity of married persons. They are based, as Scottish Members will certainly appreciate, on the recommendations of the Scottish Law Commission, the proposals of which were widely supported,. That was reflected in the general welcome accorded to the Bill by hon. Members.

I am grateful to Opposition Members for the constructive contributions that have been made, which have resulted, I hope, in an improvement of the Bill in certain important respects, for example, to the incidental orders that we have just been discussing on Report. I commend the Bill to the House.

10.53 pm

Mr. Dewar: On the whole, the Bill is a useful addition to the law of Scotland. The Opposition took something of a battering from the Government for their lack of co-operation. We had examples earlier this evening. I am grateful that it was not the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram), but the Solicitor-General, who was in charge on this occasion.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

HOUSING (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Scottish Special Housing Association (Limit of Advances) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 23rd April, be approved.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Question agreed to.

Newham (Young Persons)

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

10.54 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I have sought this short debate on the problems of youth in Newham because I have become disturbed by the amount of evidence that has been presented to me by various agencies and youth workers operating in the borough of Newham and the evidence before my own eyes daily as I live in my constituency. What is emerging is making me angry and considerably alarmed for the future.

On many occasions, I and my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who has joined me here, have pointed out that the people of our borough face social, economic and environmental problems that are greater than almost anywhere else. The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—the hon Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young)—knows that from his own experiences, because all three of the Members who represent Newham have been with him on a tour of the borough. By his Department's assessment, Newham is second only to our neighbouring borough of Hackney as the most deprived local authority area in England. Whereas Hackney has partnership status, Newham is still denied it. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will give us the good news which I and my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South have been waiting so long to hear. What more evidence does the Under-Secretary of State and his colleagues require to convince them of the justice of our case?

In Newham, 11,000 households are without their own bath or inside toilet, 6,318 households are overcrowded; there is the highest percentage in the whole of London of children living in poor housing; 58 per cent. of children live in overcrowded accommodation; and 15 per cent. of children live in households containing at least one unemployed adult. For the first time, 30,000 people in Newham are on supplementary benefit. Sixty five per cent of the council's tenants receive housing benefit. With 17,000 people out of work, the unemployment rate approaches 20 per cent. The Under-Secretary of State knows these statistics, yet we still seem unable to convince him and his colleagues that we need that extra assistance that only his Government can give.

Youth unemployment is considerably higher than 20 per cent. A review citing the percentages of young people who were eligible to leave school at the end of the 1984 academic year shows that their destinations were as follows: 30 per cent. stayed on at school, 8 per cent. attended college, and 62 per cent. left full-time education. At the earliest opportunity, 62 per cent. left school. Of that percentage, 20 per cent. are known to be in permanent employment, 11 per cent. are known to be on the youth training scheme, 25 per cent. are registered for work at the careers office and the destination of 44 per cent. is unknown. Of the 62 per cent. of those who left school at the end of that academic year, 69 per cent. are either registered for work or seem to have dropped out of the system — 42 per cent. of the entire output of that academic year. That is a tragic comment on the state of the job market and the prospects facing youth in Newham.

High unemployment, a poor environment, housing stress, low educational achievement and a general lack of social amenities combine to brutalise people, especially the young. What sort of background is that for the youth of Newham to grow up in? Would the Under-Secretary of State want his children to face those miserable prospects? A whole generation is becoming increasingly dispossessed of those rights and opportunities that were established, improved or maintained during the past 30 years.

Youth as a group in our society is damaged far more by unemployment than others. The Government's blind and tragic refusal to assist any growth in the economy, together with the imposition of cuts in public expenditure and the insidious rolling back of the welfare state, hit the young disproportionately in Newham and elsewhere.

It is all very well to talk about voluntary redundancies, early retirements and natural wastage. They sound painless —perhaps for some of the workers involved they are— but for the young, these devices merely mean more jobs lost and further restrictions placed on their all-too-limited job propects.

In Newham, as elsewhere, the young are being continually bombarded, on television, in newspapers and in shops, with all the tempting luxuries that money can buy —if that money were available. In our acquisitive and materialistic society, the expectations and the needs of the young are being continually excited—but for so many of them the means to meet those expectations are being cruelly denied.

The Prime Minister is fond of talking about moral values, but, frankly, she gives no moral lead to the young in Newham or in the country as a whole. After all, her economic policies are deliberately geared to promoting self-interest, greed, selfishness and soulless materialism. If we add to that a concoction of mindless populism and a willingness to employ crude force rather then arguments, we have the creation of a social time bomb that could yet destroy what civilised norms are left in this country. The recent upsurge in violent behaviour among football crowds can and is being seen by some as a harbinger of future developments in the wider society that we all ignore at our peril.

At a recent meeting that I attended in Newham of young people in receipt of DHSS board and lodging payments —soon to be hounded out of the borough and moved around the country because of the Government's changes in regulations—one youngster said that he would be better off in jail. What an indictment of our times for a young person to say that in a meeting and get agreement from so many other young people. Yet this Government are busily creating among the young an ever-increasing number who adopt just that attitude. Those young people cannot see what stake they have in our society. Indeed, they have no stake. For them there are no social norms, about which the Prime Minister keeps talking. They feel that they have nothing to lose by turning to violence, drugs and crime.

It is a matter of some regret that Newham has a high crime rate. Tragically, it is growing fastest among the young. But in a society that rewards the strong and denigrates the weak, is it any wonder that so many of our young are being corrupted and led astray? Professional youth workers in Newham have told me of 18 and 19-year olds who are already long-term unemployed, gradually losing all self-respect and respect for others. Young people in my borough spend large amounts of time begging—

this is 1985 — and it is tragic that that is becoming socially acceptable among the young. There is also increasing evidence that teenage prostitution is on the increase, and many young women in Newham are deliberately entering into disastrously early relationships and pregnancies as a way of trying to achieve some form of adult status and their own accommodation. They regularly come to my advice surgery. The borough already has more than 5,000 single-parent households.

Against that frightening social background, Newham council and the voluntary organisations working with young people are subject to increasing attacks upon their resources. Youth services have been forced to cut back on their provision and curtail badly needed building programmes while the Government deliberately redistribute support to the shire counties and pump money into face-saving and cosmetic training schemes — neglecting those experienced agencies that have traditionally supported the young people who have difficulty coming to terms with the adult world.

Many of the professional youth workers in Newham feel that we are approaching a situation where the majority of young people will be unable to take the normal steps to adulthood. It has been suggested—and I tend to agree from my experience — that inner-city areas such as Newham will eventually be reduced to battlefields of warring gangs of youth. Already the police in the borough are overwhelmed by the sheer level of street crime, racist attacks and burglaries. Householders in Newham, as in other parts of London, are being encouraged to employ private security firms to patrol the streets and protect their properties.

Inexorably we are moving towards no-go areas, where policing will either be absent or very limited—and that, of course, will be complemented by middle class enclaves where police effort will be concentrated. Those are existing or possible images of life in Newham in the 1980s and the 1990s, as ordinary, decent people in my community are gradually overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the problems confronting them. Those images are not the product of my over-stretched imagination but are based on statments made to me by responsible individuals who are growing both frightened and alarmed by what they see and hear around them in the borough of Newham.

Much as I have time for the Minister—although he has taxed me in terms of my patience and my sympathy on many occasions—I expect little, if anything from him or his Government, because it is his Government who are responsible for the the rapid pace of social breakdown in Newham. The youth of my borough, not surprisingly, want real jobs and decent pay. They want homes. They want social and recreational facilities into which they can channel their energy and exuberance.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that in the south of the borough, in the royal Victoria dock, the borough council has a lease with the London Docklands Development Corporation for recreation on that mile-long stretch of water? But it is a lease for only five years with an unelected body. Does not that emphasise one of our problems — the existence of an unelected body which governs a very large area of the south of the borough?

Mr. Banks: I could not agree more. The Minister and his colleagues are continually pointing out to us the success, as they see it, of the London Docklands Development Corporation, but the LDDC has been given resources and powers that the borough councils in the docklands area and the GLC can only have dreamt of in past years. The difficulty is that so many of the activities of the LDDC take place behind closed doors. I have to keep asking the Minister questions to find out what is going on in docklands.

The one thing we know is that after the next Labour Government are elected in a couple of years' time, the LDDC will be abolished, and the resources that it is currently squandering will be given to the docklands boroughs to deal with the problems of the people of Newham in the way that they would want them dealt with.

We want action from the Government. We do not want lectures from the Prime Minister, coming from her wealthy and privileged background, about the responsibilities of youth. There is no way that Newham borough council can provide out of our own resources the sorts of things that we want. We desperately need a Government who will recognise the social time bomb that is even now being primed in Newham and other inner city areas. We want such a Government to act with speed and determination to eliminate the economic and social deprivation which is the root cause of the problems that I have been trying to discuss.

I do not expect to see this Government being sympathetic or taking any action. I know that that can come only with the speedy election of a Labour Government. I hope that that Labour Government will appoint a Minister with special responsibilities for the young, since the young represent society's investment for the future. It is an investment that is being cruelly squandered in Britain at the moment. The signs of social collapse starting with the young are there in Newham and elsewhere in London for all who wish to see, but tragically that does not appear to include the Prime Minister and her Government.

11.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): During the course of his remarks, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) accused me of taxing him and taxing his patience. For the past 12 months I have been answering the parliamentary questions churned out by his research assistant. I think that my patience has been taxed just as much as the hon. Gentleman's. On the LDDC alone, I have answered 102 parliamentary questions in the past 12 months. I think that the hon. Gentleman is running out of steam, because his four recent questions were identical to one that he asked me only a fortnight ago.

The hon. Gentleman has tabled some interesting questions about the number of paper clips purchased by my Department. Information that has been released to us from the GLC indicates that it is part of his campaign to try to destroy the stamina and the enthusiasm of my officials. I have to tell him that his campaign will not work. The hon. Gentleman is riding his hobbyhorse again. The reality is that the LDDC has produced action. Towards the end of his remarks he asked for action. There was little action before the LDDC. There was a great deal of talk. The GLC had access to all the resources that it needed, if it had wanted to make substantial progress in docklands, but it did not make use of them. There was a rather unconstructive dialogue between the GLC and the

[Sir George Young]

boroughs. Now there is action. If one goes around the docklands area one can see work being created and homes being built.

Although the hon. Gentleman wants the LDDC to be wound up, in other parts of the country where we have LDDC-type operations in the form of the new towns, each time that the Government want to wind one of them up we receive representations from his colleagues asking us to keep for another year or so that quango, appointed by Ministers, which is unelected and not accountable to local people.

I come now to the theme of the hon. Gentleman's speech. I welcomed the time that he and the hon. Members for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) took when they escorted me around the borough for a day last year. It made a great impression on me. I enjoyed meeting the people in the borough. I hope that some, if not all, of the decisions that my Department has taken subsequently have been of some help.

I want to assure the hon. Gentleman that the plight of young unemployed people is a matter of deep anxiety to me and to the Government. We are, of course, aware of the problems facing young people, about which the hon. Gentleman spoke so eloquently, many of them from disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities who are living in inner city areas such as Newham.

In many ways, it is those young people who have been hardest hit by the recession. It is in recognition of that that the Government are pursuing some specific initiatives aimed at improving employment prospects and providing social and community support for young people. Young people in Newham want hope, self-respect and a job. In that they are the same as young people in Acton or anywhere else in London.

Our first priority must be to reduce the level of youth unemployment. I accept that the rate in Newham is among the highest in London. Some measure of the importance that we place on that is the £2·25 billion that the Government spent in 1984-85 on employment and training schemes, many of them aimed at young people.

The main initiative directed at improving the skills and training of school leavers is, of course, the YTS. In view of the figures that the hon. Gentleman deployed, that is of special relevance to Newham. However, it is important that young people take up that opportunity. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and those in the voluntary organisations with whom he is in contact will encourage young people to take up the places.

I was dismayed to find that only 82 per cent. of the YTS places in Newham were filled last year, despite the fact that nearly 80 per cent. of those who completed the training subsequently found jobs.

In 1985-86, 750 places have been approved at a total cost of £1·5 million. That budget is bigger than that for Hackney, Haringey or Southwark. It shows the priority that we place on tackling the problems in Newham.

I was encouraged to hear that Newham is sponsoring three schemes with over 90 places—a social services training workshop, a clerical and a building scheme! I was pleased to learn that there is a high ethnic minority participation in those schemes.

Apart from the council, Newham does not have many large employers to run schemes. I was interested to see that a successful project has been achieved by the Docklands and East London Training Agency, which is acting as a managing agent for a scheme sponsored by Grand Metropolitan Community Services. DELTA has links with 170 potential providers of training—mainly small firms covering a wide range of trades—and, when necessary, it can cater for trainees' individual preferences. Those have included locksmiths, glass blowers and Afro-Caribbean hairdressers. I believe that that shows a potential for providing training linked to local firms and the needs of young trainees.

In addition, as from April 1986, YTS will be extended to provide two years' training for 16-year-old school leavers and one year for 17-year-old leavers, thus ensuring that anyone under 18 who is not still at school and has no job has the opportunity to receive good quality training.

In addition to YTS, there are a number of MSC employment initiatives available to young people in Newham, of which the major one is the community programme. Under this, long-term unemployed over the age of 18 are provided with temporary employment on projects of benefit to the community. At the end of April this year there were in Newham a total of 249 community programme places, and I am glad to say the take-up here was 90 per cent. As with the YTS, young people must be encouraged to take advantage of the employment opportunities offered by the community programme, which is being expanded nationally from 100,000 filled places to 230,000 by the end of May 1986. Agreement has now been reached for an initial increase of 50,000 by December of this year, of which 13,500 will be in London. Additional places in Newham and other London boroughs are currently being considered.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about the resources available to the local authority and complained about cuts in services. Between 1981-82 and 1984-85 the London borough of Newham's current expenditure increased by 30·8 per cent., ranking second to the London boroughs. The average increase was 17·6 per cent. The borough's 1985-86 target of £124·154 million is a 3·76 per cent. increase on the 1984-85 budget. The grant related expenditure of £544 per head ranks highest of the London boroughs and is to be compared with an average of £384. Some of the problems that the hon. Gentleman mentioned of deprivation and some of the client groups in the borough are recognised in some of the figures which I have quoted.

Mr. Banks: Can the Minister tell us whether Newham will be rate capped in the next year?

Sir George Young: No, I cannot. That is because the Government have not yet addressed themselves to the important problem of rate capping next year. I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that a number of councils are still grappling with their consciences over decisions for this year. I think that he knows also what the timetable is for rate capping next year.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned, as I thought he might, the designation of the London borough of Newham under the urban programme. We provide extensive support for projects in Newham that are aimed at both improving the skills of young people and providing social and community support. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South have been consistent in their campaign for more Government resources to be directed towards Newham, particularly in

their support of the borough's case for promotion to partnership status. The argument in favour of partnership or programme authority status for Newham under the urban programme has been forcefully stated again tonight. The council narrowly missed such status when the lists were last reviewed in 1983. It had not at that time submitted the powerful submission which I discussed with hon. Members from the borough and representatives of the council, the voluntary sector and the chamber of commerce last December. However, I recognised at that meeting that when the list is next reviewed Newham will be knocking very strongly at the door. The hon. Gentleman asked whether we needed any more evidence. I can tell him that I think we have all the evidence that we need. I accept that the case has been presented forcefully. For the time being, the best course for the borough must be to maximise its benefits from the sources of funding that are available, and these are not insubstantial.

I am delighted to see that Newham is making a more concerted attempt to benefit from urban development grant. The approval of the £500,000 UDG in March for the redevelopment of a former power station site by Gunson Sortex in the Marshgate industrial improvement area is an indication of the potential of UDG. It will directly lever £2·8 million of private investment and provide 82,000 sq ft of industrial and office space—a significant source of jobs in a depressed area.

The programme of reclamation, job creation and housing provision by the LDDC is also a continuing positive force in the southern part of the borough. This year alone about £4·8 million has been allocated for environmental works, reclamation and utilities in the Newham area of docklands in addition to £250,000 of support for voluntary projects. In future, the development of the STOLport should attract more employment to the royal docks area. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State acknowledged that in his recent decision to approve outline planning permission for the airport. Clearly these initiatives do not solve all the borough's problems, but they are not irrelevant to the issue of unemployment.

I turn to the current position of other urban programmes support. Newham current receives funding for industrial and commercial projects as an other designated district — or ODD as it is generally called — and for social projects under the traditional urban programme. As an ODD, Newham receives grant towards a range of projects aimed at economic regeneration, in particular to help small businesses get established. In 1984-85 such support amounted to £475,000, and for 1985-86 nearly £250,000 has already been approved. A particularly good example of the cost-effectiveness of the support is the Stratford workshops project. We have recently approved a £35,000 grant for improvements and six new workshops, additional to the 89 small starter units already available and in action. They provide cheap and accessible accommodation for new firms and, in addition, grant can be made available to help new firms start up. That could provide the opportunity for new young businesses to build on some of the skills obtained from the training initiatives in the borough. Occupancy of the units is consistently high, and once established many of the firms move to larger premises.

I have been impressed by the way in which Newham has managed its use of ODD funds and industrial development generally. It is good at giving advice and help to firms, and it receives active co-operation from the private sector in the area, which proved willing to assist in making business expertise available to counsel and advise new businesses. As a result, the borough gives grants only when they are strictly necessary and will be effective.

Mr. Banks: Is the Minister aware that the Greater London Enterprise Board gives considerable assistance in Newham? However, the Minister for Local Government is putting restrictions on the GLEB, which could jeopardise jobs in Newham and elsewhere. What has the Minister to say about that?

Sir George Young: I think that I have seen the letter to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government from the GLEB which asked for a meeting to discuss these issues. I hope that a meeting will take place shortly, when they can be discussed in sightly more detail.

When I met the delegation from Newham in November 1984, it was clear that there were still opportunities for even wider use of urban programme resources to include broader-based training projects, particularly aimed at the young unemployed. I encourage projects of this type. No such schemes have yet been put to me, but my Department would be glad to discuss any proposals with the borough and we would be sympathetic to funding worthwhile projects.

Regarding the traditional urban programme, we have always recognised Newham's high level of deprivation. For 1985-86 the borough has received the highest level of new approvals, not only in London but in the whole country. Six new projects, costing £400,000, were approved. That represents an increase of 50 per cent. over the level of new projects approved last year. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that that is a clear reflection of our policy of concentrating traditional urban programme funds in the most extensively deprived areas. I hope that it reminds him that nationally, because of the continuing high level of support for existing schemes, resources for new projects have inevitably fallen again by about half. Newham receives considerable support for continuing projects, which amounts to £765,000 for 1985-86.

The hon. Gentleman touched on the board and lodging regulations, which were debated extensively on 2 April. My only point this evening is that the DHSS is carefully monitoring the effects of the new regulations, and my Department will liaise with it closely. In the light of how the system operates, Ministers will consider whether any changes are necessary.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned many issues about dealing with juvenile crime in the borough and relationships with the police. I was interested to hear of the way in which the police are working with youngsters in Newham, especially ethnic minority groups. No fewer than 13 initiatives have been brought to my attention, which aim to improve links between the police and young people, increase the understanding of police work, and provide social support for young offenders.

I am aware that I have not done full justice to the wide range of issues raised by the hon. Gentleman. I shall write to him to deal with the more significant omissions, and perhaps he will table yet another question to me to elicit responses. I assure him that the Government are aware of the problems faced by young people in Newham and that

[Sir George Young]

we are trying to help them. I have outlined some of the schemes introduced by the Government to tackle those problems.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 4 June 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND BILL

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.
To be considered tomorrow.

BATH CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

GREATER MANCHESTER BILL *[Lords]*

LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*

Orders read for Third reading.
To be read the Third time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Departmental Cars

1. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many cars his Department has purchased over the last two years; and whether they were produced in the United Kingdom.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): I apologise for the absence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, who is on an official visit to Denmark. Over the past two financial years—April 1983 to March 1985—we purchased 4,411 cars and car-type utility vehicles, and 96 per cent. of this total, or 4,244 vehicles, were produced in the United Kingdom.

Mr. King: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a distinction between what is produced in the United Kingdom and what is manufactured in the United Kingdom? Does he agree that priority must be given in future purchasing to the United Kingdom content of vehicles?

Mr. Lee: Yes. We buy British vehicles whenever that is sensible, economic and consistent with our international obligations. We have a first-class record of support for the United Kingdom motor industry. I note my hon. Friend's comment about content. There is a problem and we are paying increasing attention to it.

Mr. MacKenzie: What on earth is the Ministry of Defence doing with more than 4,000 cars?

Mr. Lee: It is a substantial Ministry.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on the superior and good example set by his Ministry in purchasing so many British cars? I wish that other Departments would follow that example. May I reinforce the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield, (Mr. King) in saying that it is important to buy British cars with United Kingdom content?

Mr. Lee: Increasingly we are taking into account United Kingdom content in our purchasing.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Minister's answer was carefully drafted, and I have no doubt that he is pleased with its reception, but why is it necessary for Ministers, the top brass and top civil servants, to drive around in Ford Granadas, which are mainly, if not completely, made in West Germany? Do not officials in the Foreign Office and in almost every other Government Department ride in British-made cars?

Mr. Lee: When the Ford Granadas were chosen, they were considered to be the best value for money. When there is a model change in two years' time, we shall evaluate other contenders.

Arms Control Unit

2. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the work of the arms control unit in his Department.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): The defence arms control unit was formed on 2 January. It has combined and strengthened existing civilian and military expertise within the Ministry of Defence in this area. It provides the focus within the Ministry for advice to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on how best to support the Government's policy of balanced and verifiable arms control, on which the lead responsibility continues to be with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Mr. Thomas: How can we place any confidence in the work of the unit or in statements made in the last year by the Secretary of State and other Defence Ministers when clearly they have misled the House and the country about the deployment by NATO of battlefield nuclear weapons?

Mr. Stanley: I cannot accept that. The position is clearly reflected in the communiqué that was issued after the latest meeting of the nuclear planning group. I think the hon. Gentleman will find that perfectly consistent with the answers that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my colleagues on the Front Bench have given.

Sir Antony Buck: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is most important to maintain the closest co-ordination with the Foreign Office on this matter? Would he like to say something about the co-ordination that there is between the unit and similar units working within the ambit of the Foreign Secretary?

Mr. Stanley: I entirely agree with my hon. and learned Friend. There is a need for close co-ordination, and I can assure him that it takes place extremely closely at both ministerial and official level.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Is it not a fact that this so-called arms control unit is a cosmetic exercise? What arms are being controlled? In fact, the Government are engaged on a massive escalation of nuclear power in purchasing Trident. They have accepted cruise missiles at Greenham

Common and probably at Molesworth. They are embarking on the modernisation of British battlefield nuclear weapons. What on earth are we talking about in terms of arms control?

Mr. Stanley: The right hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong when he refers to a cosmetic arrangement. I thought that the Opposition Front Bench and other Opposition Members would welcome the constructive contribution that is being made for the first time by the Ministry of Defence in arms control, under this Government.

Dr. Hampson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the previous Labour Government could have taken such an initiative, but made no such attempt to have an equivalent unit in the Ministry of Defence, which the public expect? Is the unit in touch with Washington? It is vital that we tell the American Government that they must hold to SALT 2 although it is unratified.

Mr. Stanley: I can assure my hon. Friend that the defence arms control unit keeps in close contact with opposite numbers in Washington as well as in the Foreign Office.

British Citizens (Employment)

4. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many British citizens are employed in the armed forces or otherwise by his Department.

Mr. Lee: That information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate time and effort. Each candidate for Her Majesty's armed forces, and for the Civil Service, must meet certain nationality and residence rules in order to be eligible for consideration for a post and each case is individually examined at the time of application.

Mr. Yeo: I understand that the Ministry of Defence has more than half a million United Kingdom-based staff apart from its overseas staff. We should be able to ascertain how many British and foreign citizens are employed, directly or indirectly, by the Ministry of Defence. Will my hon. Friend assure me that every effort will be made to ensure that British citizens are given every consideration when they apply for posts that are held by foreign citizens, so that the maximum number of British staff are employed by the Ministry?

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend's figure is not right. We are talking about 500,000 employees overall—service men and those on the civilian side, both here and abroad. There is no management or other requirement to provide a global nationality breakdown of service personnel and civil servants. However, I shall take into account my hon. Friend's point about United Kingdom citizens. Let me take West Germany as an example. We employ about 25,000 locally there, and probably the vast majority are German.

Mr. George: How many British citizens or other citizens are likely to be deployed on the new aircraft carrier, or through deck cruiser, the Ark Royal? Will the Minister confirm, or deny, that, after tens of millions of pounds have been spent on that aircraft carrier, no troops, sailors or aircraft will be specifically designated for it?

Mr. Lee: In terms of our planning and the size of the fleet, we believe that there is a sensible equation between the numbers that we shall employ in our Navy and the numbers that we shall require.

Falkland Islands

5. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the cost per Falkland Islander of defence expenditure in connection with the Falkland Islands for each of the next five years.

Mr. Stanley: The provision for Falklands costs included in the defence budget is equivalent to £288,000 per Falkland Islander in 1985-86, £234,000 in 1986-87 and £156,000 in 1987-88. Funding thereafter will be determined in future public expenditure surveys.

Mr. Bennett: Would not the Minister have thought that many of the Falkland Islanders would prefer a smaller sum than that to move elsewhere? Why is it so important to give such a sum of money to people in the Falkland Islands to maintain their traditional role in that area rather than to try to maintain the tradition in this country of full employment? If similar sums of money were spent in some of the areas of extremely high unemployment, would that not be far better and would we not protect the traditions of this country rather than waste the money in the Falklands?

Mr. Stanley: Those hon. Members on both sides of the House who visited the Falkland Islands have been struck by the determination of those who live there to continue living under the British way of life. I do not regard this in any way as a possible waste or misuse of money. More than 250 British people lost their lives in the recovery of those islands, and I am certain that it would be quite unacceptable to the great majority of British people not to take steps to defend them thereafter.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that all Conservative Members feel that the Secretary of State was absolutely right to mention the other day in the Falkland Islands that it was to the benefit of NATO that one member of NATO had shown the ability to back diplomacy with skilled and courageous use of force? At the same time, we should make it absolutely clear to the Argentines that the Falkland Islands are not a NATO base and that at present there is no intention of their being one.

Mr. Stanley: It was a good indicator from this country as a NATO member that it made its own determination to protect the interests of British people wherever they might be and to ensure that British territory was not subject to invasion in any part of the world.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: Is the Minister not aware that many thousands of people in the north of England will be absolutely outraged at the answer that he has just given? It costs about £200,000 per head to keep Falklanders in the Falkland Islands, yet young people in places such as the northern region have been forced to move to the south-east or the west midlands to try to find work. They could be maintained in their own areas in full-time employment —instead of suffering from 20 per cent. unemployment —for much less than we are frittering away on the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Stanley: I am quite certain that many people in the north-east of England will clearly remember what it cost,

both in human and financial terms, to repair the ravages in this country when peace broke down between 1939 and 1945.

Falklands Airfield

6. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects civilian aircraft to be able to use the military airfield in the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Stanley: To enable the remaining construction work to be completed as rapidly and as economically as possible between now and early 1986 when the airport becomes fully operational, the use of Mount Pleasant airport currently has to be limited to the following aircraft: wide-bodied aircraft owned by or chartered by the Ministry of Defence carrying service personnel; civilian passengers and priority freight; locally based light aircraft; and possibly the occasional civil charter flight. Once the airport becomes fully operational early next year, there will normally be no need to limit the frequency of either military or civil flights.

Sir William van Straubenzee: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply, and appreciate that in the early support facilities such as buildings are necessarily extremely limited. Does his answer confirm—I hope that it does—that, in view of the massive and proper investment in this remarkable airfield, there will be no avoidable delay in making it available for civilian purposes when that is possible?

Mr. Stanley: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. As I have explained, we are trying to ensure that the airfield is fully completed at the fastest possible rate. After that takes place early next year there will be no impediment, apart from overriding military requirements, to the civil use of the airfield.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has not this military airfield been an extravagant abuse and use of public resources? Is it not true that had the Government offered each Falkland Islander £150,000 or £200,000—only one fifth of the amount of money which has been spent on the Falklanders in the last four years—they would all have sought to leave the Falkland Islands and the British Government would not be faced with the prospect of defending an island that is quite indefensible? Why do the Government not review their position and face up to common sense?

Mr. Stanley: As I said previously, there is no basis for saying that the Falkland Islanders would want to leave the way of life that they have chosen.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Just make them an offer.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Stanley: Regarding the costs of the airport, it has the benefit of ensuring savings from the present cost of the air bridge, and also of giving us much greater flexibility on force levels as a result of the greater rapidity of reinforcement that we can achieve through the construction of the airfield.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Conservative Members regard honouring our commitments to the Falkland islanders as a matter of honour?

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I am certain that that is the view, not only of Conservative Members, but of the overwhelming majority of British people.

Accidental Nuclear War (Prevention)

7. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on measures taken by his Department to prevent accidental nuclear war.

17. **Mr. McTaggart** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the measures taken by his Department to prevent accidental nuclear war.

Mr. Stanley: The United Kingdom, the United States and France all have agreements with the Soviet Union to prevent accidental nuclear war. The relevant agreements for the United Kingdom are the British-Soviet Agreement on the Establishment of a Direct Communications Line —the British-Soviet hot line agreement of 1967—and the 1977 Agreement on the Prevention of Accidental Nuclear War, Cmnd. 7072.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister recall the words of the Secretary of State for Defence to the Defence Select Committee on 8 May, when he said that there was no precedent for the reduction of nuclear arms anywhere? Given that we are now in an age where the nuclear hair trigger is at its most dangerous, must we wait for a precedent before stepping back from that brink? Are we not, with increased research, moving nearer to it, which is in the opposite direction to the wishes of our country and to the other countries that he mentioned?

Mr. Stanley: I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome the fact that under the Government there has been a substantial reduction in NATO battlefield nuclear weapons, which is greater than that achieved by the Lib-Lab Government who preceded us.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the greatest risk of accidental nuclear war would come about if government were entrusted to a party which had no discernible defence policy? Does he agree also that it would be a great tragedy if there were alliance Government, bearing in mind that their two wings have at least four discernible, different and wholly conflicting policies between them?

Mr. Stanley: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that one of the essential safeguards of the continuation of peace is the certainty of deterrence, which is ensured by the continuation of the present Government.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is the Minister aware of the old maxim that what can happen, will happen? In view of that, why on earth are the Government increasing the risk of accidental nuclear war by deploying new nuclear weapons systems in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Stanley: The facts are clear. What the hon. Gentleman fears will happen has certainly not happened during the past 40 years.

Mr. Denzil Davies: In a previous answer the Minister mentioned battlefield nuclear weapons. Will he try to clear up the considerable confusion between statements made to the United States Congress by Dr. Wagner about the decision to modernise British battlefield nuclear weapons,

and the Government's statements in the House? Is it intended to replace the existing 155 mm atomic shell with a new atomic shell, which can be used and will be produced by the Americans, and which can also be adapted into a type of neutron bomb? What is the Government's position? Have they told the Americans one thing and the House another?

Mr. Stanley: That is certainly not the case. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we are not answerable for the statements made by Dr. Wagner or any other American official. I assure the right hon Gentleman that the previous answers which he and his colleagues have been given, which is that no decision has been taken to modernise British battlefield nuclear weapons, are the case.

Ulster Defence Regiment

8. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the full-time and part-time Ulster Defence Regiment are Roman Catholics; and how these figures compare with those five years ago.

Mr. Lee: Between 2 and 3 per cent. of the Ulster Defence Regiment have declared their religion as Roman Catholic. Information on the position five years ago is not available, but it is probable that the proportion has not changed significantly since then.

Dr. Mawhinney: Does my hon. Friend agree that the chances of cross-community acceptance of the UDR would be increased if more of its members were Roman Catholics, and that it is precisely because the IRA recognises that fact that it has been deliberately attacking Catholic members of the UDR in recent weeks?

Mr. Lee: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. We encourage volunteers from all sections of the community in Northern Ireland, but it is most necessary to build up Catholic numbers. However, tragically, intimidation and brutal murders have undeniably had an effect on Catholic recruitment, and a particular brand of courage is required for Catholics to participate in the UDR.

Mr. Duffy: Is the Minister aware that, contrary to the statement of his hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), what is exercising the minds of Catholics in Northern Ireland is not whether they should be members of the UDR but whether they can avoid being killed by members of the UDR — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Does the Minister not recall the recent stories of convictions of members of the UDR for criminal offences and linking them with illegal Protestant paramilitary organisations? How does he think that such a tarnished organisation can possibly enhance the name and the role of the British Army?

Mr. Lee: I am very sorry that the hon. Gentleman has gone over the top in this matter. There are about 6,500 members of the UDR, and only a very small proportion of them have had allegations brought against them. There is bound to be the occasional black sheep in any group of that size. The whole House and whole country should be deeply appreciative of all those involved in the UDR. They have served with considerable bravery, integrity and dedication.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Do not the court cases mentioned by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) in his hysterical supplementary question demonstrate the determination of the authorities to ensure that any crimes committed by members of the UDR are properly punished? Does not the fact that so many Roman Catholics who were members of the UDR have been murdered show a deliberate policy of the terrorists to intimidate Roman Catholics out of the UDR? Will the Ministry of Defence acquaint the House and the public with the extent of the Roman Catholic sacrifice?

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend is right on all counts, but it would be inappropriate for me to comment on particular cases before they come to the courts. One is very conscious of the intimidation and the seeming picking off by terrorists of Catholic members of the UDR.

Mr. Flannery: When will the Government face reality in regard to Northern Ireland and realise that the overwhelming majority of Catholics would no more dream of joining the UDR than of flying in the air? The reality is that they believe in a united Ireland, and that due to British imperialism there will never be peace in that benighted country until Ireland is united.

Mr. Lee: The hon. Gentleman is at least consistent in his minority view.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Minister aware that when anyone dies in Northern Ireland, whether it is a member of the UDR, a British soldier, a terrorist — however misled he may be — or an innocent civilian, that is a blow to their families, their friends and to everybody, and that we cannot but sympathise with them? That having been said, is the Minister aware of the utter alienation of the minority population in Northern Ireland from the UDR, partly because of its origins in the B Specials and partly because of its continuing conduct over the years in the treatment of individuals, whether they have been guilty of criminal offences or not?

Is the Minister also aware that the future of the UDR is one of the main issues under discussion between the British Government and the Government of the Republic, and that a sensible policy of trying to move away from having too much reliance on the UDR, together with a reduction in its numbers, would be far more effective in achieving peace in Northern Ireland than most other actions taken by the Government?

Mr. Lee: Once again the hon. Gentleman's views are consistent, and he frequently expresses them on the UDR. The Army and the UDR are required at all times to operate within the law.

Local Overseas Allowances

9. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the local overseas allowances of Property Services Agency staff stationed in Northern Ireland, West Germany or Gibraltar in comparison with those payable to airmen with the rank of sergeant or flight lieutenant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The overseas cost of living allowance for civil servants in the Property Services Agency or other Departments is known as foreign service allowance. Because of differing conditions of service and salary levels it is not directly comparable with the local overseas allowance paid to service men.

Local overseas allowance for the ranks mentioned varies between nothing and £2,248 per annum. Foreign

service allowance for equivalent civilians varies between £220 per annum and £2,613 per annum. I have written to my hon. Friend with further full details.

Mr. Speller: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer. However, is he aware of the deep resentment that is felt by the armed forces, who are clearly at a disadvantage compared with their civilian counterparts in similar positions? Is he also aware of the number of young officers and non-commissioned officers who have said that they will be leaving the services at the end of their present engagements? Will he ask that changes in the local overseas allowance should in future be treated more sympathetically and phased in more cleverly?

Mr. Lee: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his interest, but there is no evidence to suggest that the reduction in the local overseas allowance in Germany has caused many of the younger officers and non-commissioned officers to give notice of their intention to leave. The overseas foreign service allowance paid to civil servants employed by the Property Services Agency and the Ministry of Defence is also subject to periodic review. The foreign service allowance in Germany was reviewed in November 1984. Substantial reductions were involved, which came into effect on 1 January 1985. The reductions in the local overseas allowance are being delayed by two months beyond the normal implementation date.

Mr. Skinner: In answer to an earlier question about how many people are employed by the British Government abroad the Minister said that he did not know; he did not have a clue about how many people the Government employ. Now he tells us how much money the Government are spending on these people, although he does not know how many he has. If the Minister knows how much money the Government are spending, he ought to know how many British citizens are employed abroad.

Mr. Lee: The hon. Gentleman should listen more carefully to questions and answers. The original question that was put to me related to the nationality of those we employ, not to the numbers. I made it quite clear that in the Ministry of Defence we employ about 500,000 people — about 330,000 in the armed forces and 170,000 civilians.

Mr. Gorst: The last thing that I would wish to do is to accuse any of my right hon. or hon. Friends of complacency, and I do not. However, in view of my hon. Friend's answer a moment or two ago, may I ask him to have another look at the effect that the local overseas allowance may have in future upon the availability of both skilled and ordinary employees, particularly in the posting in west Germany. If there are no figures at the moment which prove that people will leave the services, will my hon. Friend carry out a survey to find out what are the attitudes that may lead to people leaving the services?

Mr. Lee: We shall keep the situation under review. There is a specific question on this point from the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), which will be answered by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. There was a reduction in the local overseas allowance for those serving in Germany, and this was not well received, but about 6,000 people benefited in almost all other postings, including the United States of America, Gibraltar, Hong Kong and Belize.

Service Personnel (Retention)

11. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is considering any measures to improve the rate of retention of service personnel within the armed forces.

Mr. Stanley: The present Government have implemented the recommendations in successive reports of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body. Retention throughout the lifetime of this Government has to date been significantly better in the armed forces overall than it was immediately prior to May 1979. The services have in hand certain measures to improve the retention rates of particular categories of personnel.

Mr. Cartwright: In view of the very angry reaction from service men in Germany to the cuts in the local overseas allowance — a reaction of which all hon. Members have been made aware—is the Minister saying that what are real cuts in the living standards of those personnel will not lead to any problems over retaining key personnel in Germany?

Mr. Stanley: As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said, we are all aware of the disappointment that was felt in Germany about the outcome of the LOA review. I remind the House, as my hon. Friend explained in the Adjournment debate on 20 May, that the LOA is not pay but is in addition to pay to compensate service men for the differential in the cost of living between the United Kingdom and overseas. When that differential narrows the LOA is reduced, and when it widens it is increased. It has to be seen in that light. The overall view in the three services across the world is that the LOA is an important protection for service men so that they know that when they are posted overseas they will not suffer a major reduction in take-home income because of having to bear the increased costs of the overseas postings to which they are sent.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the reduction of the LOA, particularly in BAOR—I have just returned from a visit there because my son is serving in that part of the world—has had a dreadful effect not only upon young officers but on skilled NCOs? Is he aware that these young people are likely to come out of the Army, as my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) said, as soon as their period of service is ended? Therefore, will my hon. Friend take up some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) in a recent Adjournment debate and look at the possibility of providing further free transport to and from Germany and the United Kingdom?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend has already kindly written to me on that point and I shall be sending him a considered reply. We are continually looking at the various allowances that are available to our service men to try to ensure that we give them, within the limits of justifiable public expenditure, the best possible conditions of service package. We shall continue to do that.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that one of the things that keeps service men in the service is professional pride in their job? Does he realise that the Government's cost-cutting exercise—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman speaks from personal experience.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Minister realise that the present cost-cutting exercise undertaken by the Ministry of Defence has resulted in a reduction in training ammunition for the services and has meant that in many cases they are not able to afford the fuel for aircraft and military transport that is needed for effective training? What will the Minister do to ensure that there are reasonable professional standards in the services?

Mr. Stanley: Judging by the enormous increase in real terms — 20 per cent. — under this Government, professional satisfaction among our service men is at a higher level than it was when the hon. Gentleman decided to come out of the services.

Mr. Stokes: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in spite of the marked increase in morale in all the armed forces since 1979, there has been some deterioration in the services in recent months, particularly among Army officers, and some disquiet about their future and that of other ranks? Is this not a matter of the gravest importance, into which we should look very carefully?

Mr. Stanley: I can confirm that the Department, and Ministers as they go around the services, are very much aware of my hon. Friend's point. That is why we are continuing, with the principal personnel officers, to look for ways in which we can do our best to improve overall conditions of service for the armed services. Our record on service pay is altogether better than that of our predecessors.

Mr. O'Neill: Is it not the case that the rate of outflow of naval officers is reaching crisis proportions and that it is now the highest figure since the 1970s? Is he aware that in the recent Southampton incident, involving a collision, there was a direct relationship between the lack of experienced officers and the difficulties in which the ship became involved? Is it not arch complacency for the Government to say that officers are in good heart when they are leaving the Navy in such dramatic numbers?

Mr. Stanley: I think that the hon. Gentleman is in a very poor position to accuse the Government of complacency. I remind him that in the financial year 1978-79, the last financial year of the Labour Government, premature voluntary retirements by men in the armed services had risen to 4·4 per cent., which is a record high over the last 10 years. This is in comparison with the last financial year 1984-85, for which the figure was 2·5 per cent.—a very substantially lower figure than when this Government came into office.

Chemical Weapons

13. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the proportion of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Warsaw pact defence expenditure devoted to producing chemical weapons and personnel trained to use them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: It is not possible to isolate those elements of Warsaw pact defence expenditure which are related solely to chemical warfare. However, it is estimated that the Soviets now have some 300,000 tonnes of chemical warfare agents at their disposal, which is sufficient to cause death and incapacitation on a massive scale.

Mr. Greenway: Is my hon. Friend also aware that 191 Soviet divisions have current training in this area, and that since we have no chemical weapons ourselves we need to look at this very carefully? What is my hon. Friend saying in response to the NATO supreme commander's calls for a specific response to this terrible challenge?

Mr. Stanley: I can certainly confirm what my hon. Friend says about the very extensive training and equipping of Soviet forces with not merely a defensive capability, but an offensive chemical capability. As to the Government's policy, it was set out in the answer which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend), when she said:

"The facts are that Britain abandoned its chemical warfare capability in the late 1950s. There has been no change in Government policy since then, nor is any change now proposed. However, as a responsible Government, we have a duty to keep defence policy under review in the light of what my hon. Friend said about the massive Soviet capability in chemical weapons." —[*Official Report*, 10 January 1985; Vol. 70, c. 901.]

Mr. James Lamond: If that is an outline of the Government's policy, why did they not welcome the proposal made by Mr. Gromyko at the United Nations in 1982 when he put forward a detailed proposal suggesting that there be an end to the development, manufacture and deployment of chemical weapons, that existing stocks be destroyed under supervision, and that there be on the spot supervision to see that no further chemical weapons are developed? Why did the Government not welcome that?

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman seems not to be aware that we have been engaged in continuing negotiations on the chemical warfare treaty, which would have the very desirable effect of banning these weapons worldwide. The Government have played a very active and positive role in trying to make progress in those negotiations. We have contributed a whole series of working papers on the vital issue of verification and enforceability, but as yet there is no detailed agreement on how the verification provisions of that treaty can be operated. However, it is very much the Government's intention to go on working constructively towards the banning of chemical weapons.

Miss Foulkes: How do the Government intend to remedy the serious weakness that is posed to our troops in the central area in Germany?

Mr. Stanley: As I have said to the House, it is not part of the Government's policy to give themselves an offensive chemical weapon capability, but it is very much part of our policy to ensure that we give our own forces the best possible defensive equipment, and that we invest considerable sums in ensuring that their defensive equipment is kept up to date.

Mr. McNamara: Are the Government aware that Labour Members support the Government in their continuous efforts to try to get a ban on all manufacturing and deployment of chemical weapons? It is one aspect of the Government's policy which we fully support. Is the Minister also aware that there is considerable concern in the House that our major NATO ally, the United States, and its Administration, are still pursuing their policy of trying to get new chemical weapons developed for the United States forces in the NATO sphere? We urge Her

Majesty's Government to continue to put pressure upon the United States Administration not to take that foolhardy course of action.

Mr. Stanley: These are matters for the United States Administration. On this issue, as the hon. Gentleman will know, the President of the United States has recently set up a commission to advise himself on the policy way forward.

Defence Procurement

14. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he will be reporting on potential savings on his defence procurement policy.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Adam Butler): The significant improvements in value for money which are resulting from our drive to extend competition in defence procurement have already been reported in this year's Statement on the Defence Estimates. Chapter 5 gives some notable examples, including the new Royal Air Force trainer, where the final price was as much as a third lower than the original estimate of what we might have had to pay. I also gave evidence to the House of Commons Defence Committee on 11 December 1984.

All our recent experience clearly indicates that there are further and greater potential savings to be achieved from the continuing exercise of our competition policy.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my right hon. Friend confident that he can achieve the savings that are implicit in the Government's future expenditure plans?

Mr. Butler: Of course, no targets are set, but if present trends continue I hope for a very good result. It is significant that during the last month for which I have complete figures more than two thirds of new contracts by value were brought about through competition or priced otherwise by reference to market forces.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 June 1985.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Wardell: As one of the aims of the social security review is to simplify the system, why will the Prime Minister not establish a legal minimum wage and retain wages councils rather than subsidise employers through the new family credit scheme?

The Prime Minister: There is a consultative document about the future of wages councils, which has still to be decided. Evidence shows that if we set a legal minimum wage that tends to lead to increased unemployment.

Mr. Latham: When my right hon. Friend met Mr. Shamir, the Israeli Foreign Minister, this morning, did she stress Britain's total commitment to resolution 242 and to the right of Israel to exist within secure borders?

The Prime Minister: We referred to the Camp David agreement, which sets out explicitly that the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people should be honoured. As my hon. Friend knows, we fully support resolution 242.

Mr. Kinnock: Can the Prime Minister explain why, in the social security proposals outlined yesterday, no figures were given for the amounts that the unemployed, the sick and disabled, pensioners and families may expect to receive under any new arrangements? Why were no figures given for the number of households which can expect to lose as a consequence of the loss of housing benefit?

The Prime Minister: In accordance with custom, we have still to decide the figures for this year's uprating—*[Interruption]*. It is according to custom. It is done either on a historical basis or on a forecast. We rejected the forecast and chose the historical basis. That means that we must wait for the May retail price index figures, which are not published until June—*[Interruption.]* That method has been approved by the House. It is more certain than forecasting. As we have yet to decide this year's figures, we are hardly likely to decide figures for two years hence.

Mr. Kinnock: We have been told that this is a major shake-up of the social security system. Is the Prime Minister really trying to tell us that after thousands of hours of civil servants' time, endless wrangling in Government committees and three Cabinet meetings, she has no facts, no figures and no estimates? We are not asking for precise figures; we want dependable estimates of what the effect will be on families who need the benefit incomes of which they are about to be deprived.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman clearly drafted that supplementary question before he heard my reply to his original question. He might recall that even his Government determined the uprating annually on a forecast basis. We do it on a historical basis. His Government followed that procedure. We uprate each year and we like to know precisely what the figures are before we decide the uprating.

Mr. Kinnock: With the celebrated toings and froings, the postponed Cabinet meetings and the wrangles that took place, absolutely nobody can reasonably be expected to accept what the Prime Minister has said. Is it not a fact that she is trying to hide what the outcome of the proposals will be, and that even she is ashamed of her proposals? Can she not give figures? Is she afraid? Is she innumerate, or simply mendacious?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker, factual. There has been an annual uprating of social security benefits for many years. That is the fact. It is only the right hon. Gentleman who is capable of ignoring the facts. He cannot be expected to be believed if he does.

Mr. McCrindle: Does the Prime Minister think that we ought to draw any conclusions from the fact that the Leader of the Opposition is no longer prepared to leave social security matters to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher)?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure whether that is an improvement or otherwise.

Mr. Steel: Will the Prime Minister confirm one aspect of the proposals announced yesterday? Is it the case that elderly people on low incomes, living in purpose-built

housing, will in future find themselves losing part of their rate rebate and also, unless they are on supplementary benefit, housing benefit as well? If that is the case, does the Prime Minister not recognise that that means that many elderly people will not be able to afford to go on living in accommodation which successive Governments have encouraged to be specially built for them?

The Prime Minister: In the Green Paper, as the right hon. Gentleman is aware, it is intended that everyone shall be expected to pay some contribution towards rates, save possibly those on supplementary benefit. I think it is right that everyone should be expected to make a contribution towards rates so that we do not have a position in which those who make no contribution at all can demand enormous increases in local authority expenditure at the expense of other people.

Sir Ian Gilmour: Can my right hon. Friend clear up one point? Why is it suggested that everybody should have to make a contribution to rates when we understand that rates are to be abolished?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend will have heard that point referred to in my right hon. Friend's statement yesterday, if in fact he heard it. In the meantime, there are rates. We cannot say what will happen if we bring forward legislation to change rates to other taxes.

Q2. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kirkwood: Returning to the dearth of information in terms of detailed figures in the social security review, may I ask the Prime Minister to confirm that in the Rowe report on housing benefit, paragraph 319 refers to the detailed analyses and computer studies that were available. Why have the Government not made them available to the House? I warn her that if she does not do that, and does not put some arithmetical flesh on the bones of the new structure, she will stand accused of wilfully attempting to stymie comment or, worse, she will be accused of political cowardice.

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. This is a Green Paper. If the hon. Member looks in some of the separate volumes he will find many figures already there on a number of things. There are far too many to have been absorbed in the short time that the paper has been out. We are not yet prepared to put figures to particular benefits for very good reasons because we believe in sound finance — *[Interruption]*. Yes, Mr Speaker. It was the Government whom the right hon. Gentleman's party supported who did not believe in sound finance. It was the Labour Government who took us to the International Monetary Fund. We believe in sound finance and we shall wait until we are nearer the time to determine the uprating. It is the Labour party that believes in spend, spend, spend, with no thought of where the burden will be put on the working population.

Q3. **Mr. Forth** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the present social security system to which the Opposition seem irretrievably wedded is so complex that many people in need do not take up the benefits to which they are entitled? Does she therefore believe that the bold reforms proposed yesterday by our right hon. Friend will enable many people in real need to take up benefits to which they are entitled—something effectively denied them by the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr Speaker. I hope that it will also enable most of those entitled to benefit to understand how the benefits are calculated, which is virtually impossible at the moment.

Mr. Foot: Can the Prime Minister tell us whether the real figures which have been discussed in Cabinet and which were suppressed in the Green Paper will be published in the White Paper?

The Prime Minister: We have yet to determine what the upratings and figures will be. I said earlier that we had not yet decided on the upratings, which are due to take place in November. It is, therefore, not the time to decide what will happen in a few years' time.

Mr. Tracey: Given the prediction that there will be many more pensioners in the first quarter of the next century and the fact that the Opposition would change nothing, will my right hon. Friend confirm the estimate of one leading journal that our children could be paying a basic income tax rate of up to 45 per cent. to fund pensions?

The Prime Minister: Bearing in mind the promises that the Opposition regularly make for increases on everything, this country would soon be bankrupt with the policies that they propose.

4. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Loyden: At a time of mass unemployment and growing poverty, how can the Prime Minister justify what will clearly be seen as a blatant and vicious attack upon the poorest sections of our community? Is it not a fact that the Prime Minister fails absolutely to understand the reality of poverty and that her intention is to make the poor pay for the crisis which she and her Government have brought about?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to the statement made yesterday he would have heard that one of the objects of restructuring the welfare state is to see that those in need, especially needy families who are in work as well as those out of work, profit more from the social welfare system than they do at present.

Mrs. Rumbold: Some years ago the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), in a different incarnation, said that the permissive society was a civilised society. In the light of the recent football hooliganism, would my right hon. Friend care to comment on whether that might be the approach of the Social Democratic party to such behaviour?

The Prime Minister: In any society, we all have to live by rules. We all have to uphold those rules and the law. Beyond that, we live within our own self-discipline or become prey to every whim, appetite and instinct. Most of us prefer to live by the rules of society.

5. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Prime Minister stand by the suggestions made by some of her Ministers that any pay settlement for the nurses which is above 3 per cent. must be paid for by savings inside the National Health Service? Does that not mean that a pay settlement for nurses which is only at the rate of inflation will result in cuts in nurses' jobs? Is that not an appallingly unfair way to treat a dedicated profession?

The Prime Minister: I hope that the decision on the pay review bodies will be announced shortly. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that if everything demanded is in the upward direction the burden on other taxpayers will be enormous. Therefore, we have to live in total within the means that have been set out in the White Paper.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Does my right hon. Friend recognise that the social security changes that were announced yesterday are simpler, fairer and saner than ever before? Nevertheless, when my right hon. Friend, as Prime Minister, reviews the position in the year 2010, will she ensure that I receive the pension that I deserve?

The Prime Minister: I believe that our proposals can be properly financed and delivered. That would not be so unless we had embarked upon this exercise to restructure the social services.

Mr. Madden: Does the Prime Minister understand that the resentment felt by many people in Bradford when the Bradford fire disaster was linked with the riot in Birmingham has been greatly intensified by the linking of the Bradford and Birmingham incidents with the Brussels incident? Will the right hon. Lady instruct Mr. Justice Popplewell to complete his inquiry into the Bradford disaster quickly? When will she announce what money the Government will give for the rebuilding of the Valley Parade ground so that it can become a community sports facility serving all the people of Bradford?

The Prime Minister: The terms of reference of Mr. Justice Popplewell's inquiry have been set, and I believe that they were the right ones. Spectators who go to grounds must be protected on safety grounds and must be protected from hooliganism. Both aspects are being considered by Mr. Justice Popplewell, and I believe that that is absolutely right. The hon. Gentleman will have heard what I said yesterday about money. A good deal of money is going through the Football Trust and the Football Grounds Improvement Trust for these matters. Last year an extra £3·3 million was paid out of the Football Grounds Improvement Trust because there were no further applications for improvements. We are considering the finances through a working party, and all the groups concerned are represented on it. We shall need to know the results of that working party's inquiry, and what the fire investigators and surveyors say before we decide on giving any extra money for the grounds.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Pool Competitions Act 1971 (Continuance) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

CHILD ABDUCTION AND CUSTODY BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That the Child Abduction and Custody Bill *[Lords]* be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Rolls-Royce, Derby

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry today to release to the press on or about midday a written answer to the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) giving notice that the Government's merchant banking friends are being given another chance to dip their spoon into the gravy by working on proposals to privatise Rolls-Royce? That move will put the jobs of thousands of people in my constituency at risk. Has a breach of privilege—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must listen carefully to this point of order.

Mrs. Beckett: Has a breach of privilege occurred in the timing of the answer? Its manner shows the Government's customary contempt for parliamentary democracy in not allowing hon. Members to question the proposal in the House.

Mr. Speaker: Did the hon. Lady say that the answer to the question was released before 3.30 pm?

Mrs. Beckett: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The answer should have been released at 3.30 pm and not before. That is the rule.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. That is a most helpful ruling. The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) is that the answer was released to the press before 3.30 pm. As far as we know, it will not be released to the House. What course of action is available to my hon. Friend? What breach of privilege has been committed?

Mr. Speaker: I shall look into the matter. If the answer was released to the press, it would have been embargoed until 3.30 pm and should certainly not have been published before that time.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I represent constituents who are employed by Rolls-Royce at Barnoldswick. I was telephoned earlier this afternoon by the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* and asked for my comments on this release by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. There was no suggestion when I was telephoned by the journalist that there was any embargo on the information.

Mr. Speaker: I shall look into the matter.

Local Government (Proportional Representation)

3.34 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the single transferable vote system of proportional representation for all local government elections in the United Kingdom.

Arguments for proportional representation have been heard many times in the House, and will no doubt be heard many times again. But, day by day and week by week, the need for the reform of the absurd, undemocratic and unrepresentative system which has blighted our nation for generations grows ever more clear.

Many people outside the House must wonder how a Government can be elected when their vote decreased by 700,000 in the general election, yet their majority increased to 140 seats, when only about one in three of electors voted for that party. But that was two years ago, and I am sure that all Conservative Members will have noticed the recent opinion polls by Gallup and Marplan. The handicaps with which they are now faced have been suffered by third parties under the first-past-the-post system for many years, and are well known by my right hon. and hon. Friends in the alliance. If any Conservative Member would like me to explain them, I should be more than happy to do so, but if they prefer an academic opinion they should read the pamphlet written by Dr. Gordon Reece, which is available from the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire). It explains with admirable clarity that the Conservative party would be reduced to a rump of 66 seats on its present standing of 29 per cent. in the polls under the first-past-the-post system.

Nevertheless, many Conservative and Labour Members may remain doubtful about the introduction of proportional representation in elections to the House. I do not share their doubts, but I invite them to consider whether they extend to elections for local authorities, which is the subject of my Bill today. The electorate in the area of a local council, be it county, region, district or borough, is not being asked to elect a Government; it is being invited to choose men and women to deal with the problems of its community, and it deserves an electoral system which gives people the opportunity to have their views reflected in the council chamber.

That is not the present system, and examples of distortion in local government are not hard to find. In 1984, in Liverpool, 90,000 voters supported the Labour party and 100,000 people voted against it, yet a Militant administration was elected there with a majority of about 15 seats on the city council. In the same year in Edinburgh, 66,000 people voted for the Labour party and more than 100,000 voted against it, yet the Labour party has a majority on the council of six. The policies of those councils are well known, and Conservative Members have frequently deplored them, yet every Conservative Member who votes against my Bill today is saying, "I want those Left-wing policies to be implemented in those cities against the wishes of the majority of their inhabitants."

I would not want it to be thought that the Bill is aimed only at Labour-controlled councils. In 1982, in the London borough of Sutton, the Conservative party won just more than 50 per cent. of the vote. I fully accept that that would entitle the Conservatives to control the council, but I do

not accept that it entitles them to 82 per cent. of the seats. Only last month in Surrey county council the Conservatives won more than two thirds of the seats on fewer than half of the votes. Every Labour Member who votes against the Bill today is saying: "I want Conservative policies implemented in Surrey against the wishes of the majority of the people."

The Bill is not aimed at any party. It does not seek to stop parties from winning absolute control of local councils, but it will stop them from achieving such power if the electorate does not agree with them. The results of our apology for an electoral system are often ludicrous. In 1982, in the London borough of Brent, the Conservatives won 6 per cent. more votes than did Labour, but finished with fewer seats. In the same year in Islington the Labour party took 51 of the 52 seats on just more than 50 per cent. of the vote. The Conservative party won 24 per cent. of the vote—1 per cent. more than the alliance—yet it was rewarded with no seats compared with our one. In Tunbridge Wells in the same year, again on just more than half the vote, the Conservative party took all 16 seats.

How can anyone pretend that such outcomes are justified? How can it be right not to have any minority interest representation, or only a derisory representation? How can it be right for total, almost unchallenged, power over the affairs of any local community to be vested in the hands of any one party?

That the powers are often abused is all too evident. Rigged agendas, denial of the right of democratic debate and the appointment of council officers on the basis of their political views happens in authorities such as Liverpool where the majority party is grossly over-represented. In Tammany town halls, officials know that their future is dependent on their relations with the members of a single political party. In such circumstances, the majority party may believe that it can get away with anything.

The report of the Royal Commission on standards of conduct in political life stated:

"The local authorities most vulnerable to corruption have tended to be those in which one political party has unchallenged dominance. Not only are such authorities at particular risk because of absence of an effective opposition which can scrutinise their decisions, but investigations and the making of complaints in such areas may also be inhibited by the feeling that there is no way round the party machine".

The Bill seeks to end that. It would introduce the single transferable vote system of elections to local government elections everywhere. Under the system voters elect a number of councillors for each ward. They number the candidates in order of preference on their ballot papers, and thus can transfer their lower preferences between parties, within parties, and even to independents. They can vote for whom they like and will be sure that, whatever the choice, their vote will not be wasted—unlike under the present system—since if their first choice candidate is not elected their vote will transfer to their second choice and so on.

Evidence from other countries which already use that system show that it results in the election of more women and more representatives of ethnic minorities. It results in a higher turnout, which is of special importance for local government.

Evidence from opinion polls in the United Kingdom shows that this system, or any other PR system, is supported by a large majority of the population. It is also supported in the House of Lords. Earlier this year Lord Blake, the distinguished Conservative historian, pressed for such a measure and a Bill passed through all its stages without Division.

My Bill should commend itself to the House. It commands support from all parties and there may even be some support for it in the Government. I draw attention to the comment by the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, the hon. Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson) who, when referring to parental choice, in a debate on appeals procedure under the Education Act 1980 said:

"There is a similar disappointment for the people who voted Conservative in Stockport, North and those who voted Labour in my constituency. They might ask what the point is in voting. Whatever people may think of the person who represents them, it is a funny system. People vote and then find that they are not represented."—[*Official Report*, 20 December 1982; Vol. 34, c. 802.]

I hope that hon. Members will support the Bill, which allows proportional representation to be tested at a level at which it is most clearly needed. It will sometimes lead to parties having no overall majority on a council; but so does our present system, as I am sure everyone who has studied the results of the county council elections is well aware. Most importantly, the Bill will bring back to local government democracy, representativeness, and accountability.

3.43 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to oppose the motion?

Mr. Skinner: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I shall not take long to oppose it, but some of us are more than a little tired of hearing Liberal spokesmen talking about proportional representation and transferable votes. I think that the Liberals want proportional representation in local government because there is such a row between the Liberals and the Social Democrats that they want the opportunity to stand against one another. That is the plan. If we are not careful, we shall finish with something like the system in Northern Ireland. Is not that a wonderful hotch-potch?—*[Interruption.]* I did not do that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We should not be considering what the hon. Gentleman did not do.

Mr. Skinner: I am opposing the Bill because I believe that a majority in the House wants to ensure that we do not allow it to go forward.

There have just been elections in Northern Ireland on a transferable vote system. We can see the result. According to the news today, all hell has been let loose in various councils. They have had to bring in the police—*[Interruption.]* — and countless other incidents have occurred—*[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is generally accepted in the House that hon. Members listen to speeches — *[Interruption.]* As one who listens to speeches, I object most strongly to the so-called alliance rabble barracking my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I entirely — *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) has raised a point of order with me, not with the alliance. I agree with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Skinner: I am pleased that you agree, Mr. Speaker. I shall not complain about the hooligan-type conduct of the Liberals and Social Democrats because they do it continually. I do not need an extra microphone, as the leader of the Liberal party does. He had an extra mike put in at a cost of £10,000, and there is an extra one on the Tory Benches——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us get back to the subject.

Mr. Skinner: I was just trying to explain that it does not worry me what the alliance does, because at the end of the day there will be fewer of them after the general election that there are now irrespective of whether they have the local government transferable vote.

The Liberal party and the Social Democratic party can agree on hardly anything. I should like to know what the local government candidates would do on matters affecting policy. Would they be able to put out joint manifestos — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) is rabbiting on again. Would they put out joint manifestos on the abolition of the welfare state? The leader of the Social Democratic party is quite anxious to see the changes that have been put forward by the Government. However, the Liberals are not very happy about it, or at least they have slight reservations—not in principle, simply on the arithmetic. Therefore, it would be interesting to see those manifestos.

I suspect that we would have not joint selection for candidates in local government, but almighty rows based not on democracy but on some sort of quasi-regional vote, in which delegates would come from the various areas —*[Interruption.]* No, that is absolutely wrong.

Those are some of the problems that would occur. I do not believe that the Bill will get very far because the Government will kill it as they have killed many others on a Friday — *[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Leeds, West wish to intervene?

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I cannot.

Mr. Skinner: I am prepared to break with precedent.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Standing Orders do not allow it.

Mr. Skinner: I appreciate that.

The cause of proportional representation, rather than being on the upward trend, is now, according to the Liberals and Social Democrats in their pamphlets, going downhill just a little bit. I do not want to over-egg the pudding, but I read a pamphlet the other day by the alliance which said that whereas it had been generally in favour of proportional representation for everybody in the British Isles, it now had some reservations about the Orkney and Shetland constituency, and Caithness and Sutherland — [HON. MEMBERS: "And the Isle of Wight."] Indeed. The reason is, rather strangely, that members of the alliance realise that they could not guarantee that their candidates in those three parliamentary constituencies would win on the basis of a transferable vote. They are happy with the present system for Orkney and Shetland, Caithness and Sutherland and Isle of Wight so that they can keep their Members of Parliament. We are witnessing the alliance parties indulging in hypocrisy. We oppose the motion so that we can establish clearly in the House that there is a massive majority against this barmy idea—another one—from the Liberals this afternoon.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and Nomination of Select Committees at Commencement of Public Business):—

The House divided: Ayes 29, Noes 188.

Division No. 224] **[3.50 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Best, Keith
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Faulds, Andrew
Freud, Clement
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Hanley, Jeremy
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Kennedy, Charles
Knox, David
Meadowcroft, Michael
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Ottaway, Richard
Penhaligon, David
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Rathbone, Tim
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Wallace, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. A. J. Beith and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashby, David
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Cash, William
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cowans, Harry
Crouch, David
Crowther, Stan
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dormand, Jack
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Eggar, Tim
Ellis, Raymond
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Irving, Charles
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*

Lightbown, David
Litherland, Robert
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Edward
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Nellist, David
Nelson, Anthony
O'Brien, William
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parry, Robert
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Torney, Tom
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Welsh, Michael
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winnick, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Kevin Barron and
Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours.

Question accordingly negatived.

Opposition Day

[12TH ALLOTTED DAY]—*considered*

Rural Communities in Wales

4.1 pm

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I beg to move,

That this House, noting with alarm the Government's complacency in the face of deteriorating economic and social conditions in rural communities in Wales, urges the Government to change to policies which by improving transport and other services and employment opportunities will reverse the decline of those communities.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. John: Even in a week when a great deal of our attention has been focused on the malaise that affects urban communities, it is right that we should consider this afternoon the problems of rural communities in Britain, in particular those in Wales. It is necessary to state, so that Conservative Members do not get the wrong idea, what the motion does not say. It does not say that rural depopulation and decline started with the election of a Conservative Government in 1979. Since members of the Welsh Grand Committee know that the Secretary of State's political memory goes back only to 1976, let me assure him that we do not say that it started then, either. It predates 1976.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. John: I think that the hon. Gentleman ought to refrain from commenting until he has heard a little more.

Mr. Harris: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. Gentleman has mentioned what the motion does not say, may I have your ruling on whether its true meaning ought to have been put before the House? May I also ask the hon. Gentleman to explain why the words "Brecon and Radnorshire" are not included in the motion?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) has been on his feet for only two minutes. I took his opening remarks to be a preamble before reaching what the motion actually says.

Mr. John: That is absolutely right, Mr. Speaker. There is no more coincidence regarding Brecon and Radnorshire in the motion that is being moved by the Opposition than there is in the announcement this morning by the Welsh office that Brecon and Radnor have been selected for a new experiment in education affecting rural Wales.

If I may complete the point that I was making before the intervention of the hon. Member for St Ives (Mr. Harris), for many years there has been a history of shortage of opportunity which has led to the ablest and the most ambitious leaving rural Wales. There have been fewer facilities for people in rural Wales. That much we must accept. What is completely new in the situation is the acceleration of this decline after 1979. So far from the Government's policies and priorities having tried to arrest that decline, they have contributed to it. The Government's approach is wrong. Their complacent attitude is wrong. Their policy and their attitudes must be changed.

[Mr. John]

I can understand why Thatcherites ask whether it is right for any community, whether rural or otherwise, to be artificially preserved. We say unequivocally that it is right for such communities to be preserved. Thatcherites should accept, as we do, that in so far as rural communities have been maintained since the Second World War this has been done by means of far-sighted public expenditure on health, education, transport amd employment. Nobody will deny that since the war British agriculture, the lynch pin of the rural economy, has been enabled to flourish by the expenditure of public money.

We must assess, if we can, the needs and aspirations of rural communities in Wales in order to reshape policies and create conditions in which it will be possible for everybody to remain in those communities throughout their lives. The lack of one or more of the basic facilities is swelling the exodus and undermining the viability of rural areas. The lack of local employment is the most important factor in driving young people away from rural communities at an alarming rate. For the want of convenient education, families with young children are being forced to choose between moving and subjecting their children, from the most tender age, to sizable daily journeys to and from school.

Between January 1979 and January 1984, 41 primary schools were closed in the four most rural counties of Wales. Closures in Powis meant a reduction of over 7·5 per cent. To social isolation at home for those living in remote homes is added the isolation of children who are unable to play a full part in the social life of their schools, because their lives are dominated by the school bus timetable. They have to go home on the only available public transport.

Many of the schools were built before 1903. Over a quarter of the schools in Powys are in that category. Over 40 per cent. of the schools in Dyfed were also built before 1903. Those are the schools which Her Majesty's Inspectorate described in its recent report as "crumbling away". That was the headline which was to be seen in the *Western Mail* during the Whitsun recess.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the effects of sparsity of population are aggravated by the rate support grant formula which does not adequately recognise that sparsity and has led to chronic problems in areas such as Powys?

Mr. John: It is a cyclical problem. Because schools cannot be maintained parents are faced with the agonising choice of either moving or allowing their children to make long journeys to and from school. For the want of decent employment people move out of rural communities. This historic movement makes the unemployment figures seem better than they are in reality. Even though depopulation and the drift away from country areas masks unemployment, the unemployment rate is 17·3 per cent. in Dyfed, 18 per cent. in Clwyd, 18·2 per cent. in Gwynedd and 13·3 per cent. in Powys.

If people are lucky enough to find local work, the choice of jobs is limited and the rate of pay is much lower than the average for Great Britain. In 1983, gross average earnings in rural Wales were only 88·2 per cent. of the gross average earnings in Great Britain as a whole. The gap had widened by 2·5 per cent. in the two years between 1981-83, showing a widening disparity between employment in the rural and urban communities. More up-to-date figures will show a further widening. That condemns many rural youngsters to unambitious, underpaid jobs and for the ambitious rural youngsters, even in these times of institutionalised mass unemployment, there is no freedom of choice in employment.

There are over 50,000 employed or self-employed in Welsh agriculture. Of these, over a third are in Dyfed, 18·5 per cent. in Powys and over 14 per cent. in both Clwyd and Gwynedd. Apart from its pivotal position in the rural community, agriculture is important as a source of livelihood. Everyone knows that the next decade will bring monumental changes in agriculture. The insupportability of the increasing commodity surpluses, which is now coming to crisis point, concern about the natural environment and questions about diet and health are all helping to bring about this change. Those engaged in agriculture are all anxious to begin discussing how to modify the current agriculture industry to effect these changes with the minimum dislocation.

People engaged in agriculture are still reeling from the fiasco of the unprepared imposition of the milk quota scheme, which brought ruin to some, hardship to many, and uncertainty to everybody. In scrabbling around to try to repair the blunders made by the milk scheme, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has fallen behind by almost six months in its payment of grants and allowances, and caused further hardship to the farming community in Wales.

The shambles demonstrates that there is almost a complete lack of confidence in the Government, for even in the midst of all this crisis, they are hesitant and unwilling to show any leadership. Doubts about the future will be avoided only if the Government issue a White Paper on the future of agriculture, and that is what the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is avoiding with much more energy than he devotes to defending our interests in Brussels.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will favour the House with his solutions and suggestions for dealing with the problem of persistent surpluses of dairy products, and that he will not run off into suggestions that every country in the EEC should reduce its output, but not the United Kingdom.

Mr. John: I realise that a campaign of intense rehabilitation is being mounted by the hon. Gentleman to try to work his passage back into the good graces of his Front Bench. We all know how he wore the penitent white sheet in the last Welsh Grand Committee because he was pressed to do so. I said that the structural production of surpluses is insupportable. To anybody who was listening to me, that would have meant that I do not believe that they can continue. At the moment, we are facing the problem of cereal surpluses. The hon. Gentleman has said, and I agree, that if other measures can be taken, we should try to avoid artificial restrictions such as quotas. However, if necessary, I make it clear that some restriction that will cut the amount of unwanted cereals being harvested and stored should be taken.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): The hon. Gentleman is not answering about milk.

Mr. John: The hon. Gentleman is not writing knocking copy for the *Daily Telegraph* but is taking part in a debate, so perhaps he will restrain himself for a little while.

There must be measures to restrict output. If price cutting can do so, by all means let that be so, although the present negotiations are unhappy. I criticise the milk quota scheme not because of quotas but because the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food went off one weekend saying that he would never accept quotas and came back the following Monday at the head of a quota scheme. There was no time to prepare for it, there had been inadequate preparation in the Ministry, it had not been anticipated and it brought unprecedented disaster to many people who made the mistake of taking the Minister at his word.

I have no doubt that the Government's reluctance is being masked by their Back Benchers. However, a White Paper on the future of agriculture in the next decade is desperately needed not because it will be a solution to all the problems but because a number of hard-pressed people in agriculture are pondering their future. Such a White Paper would be a welcome sign of what, if any, the Government's thinking on this matter is.

Health provision in rural areas is weak and distant. In many of the rural areas, there are some of the worst health problems. I again refer to perinatal mortality, in which Powys has the highest sub-regional rate in the United Kingdom. Despite that, many villages are without any surgery, hospital provision is being cut, whether by the closure of a whole hospital as with the geriatric hospital in Brecon or by the reduction in the number of beds, as with the 90 beds in the three hospitals serving the East Dyfed health district. Casualty and emergency treatment causes great problems for the inhabitants, in part because three of the four Welsh health authorities with rural areas consider themselves to be under-funded in hospital provision. In particular, in sparsely populated rural areas, this is inhibiting the development of community health service for the inhabitants.

Between 1980 and 1982, one in eight of the chemists, shops in Wales closed, and rural areas suffered far more than their fair share of that. Other measures necessary to support rural life, such as local shops and post offices, are declining. To make life tolerable, transport is needed for access to all facilities. Car ownership is high in Wales and is highest in Powys because of necessity, but not everyone can afford a car or is able to drive one. The poor, mothers with young children, the elderly and the infirm depend upon a public transport system that even now is inadequate. That is why I am alarmed by the Transport Bill, which will add to that problem. Its ban on cross-subsidies will stop the off-peak services that now run, because they will no longer be able to use commuter services to subsidise daytime services.

The privatisation that threatens the three largest bus companies, which now have reported losses, according to the *Western Mail* of 16 May, of £4·25 million, will cause even more severe cuts. That is bound to make the inhabitants of rural Wales feel as if they were marooned on a desert island. I beg the Government, for the sake of the health of Welsh rural communities, to rethink their policies on the Transport Bill.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Is it right that transport in rural areas should be subsidised by taxpayers and the ratepayers in the urban areas, in which case what message does the hon. Gentleman have for them, or is it right that rural transport services should be subsidised by the Government?

Mr. John: I thought that the Government's revenue came from taxpayers, but perhaps the hon. Gentleman is privy to information that I do not have. I have never been one to tell my urban electorate that the highest aim of government is higher take-home pay and lower taxes. I have always said that social public expenditure is necessary to preserve a healthy state of society in Britain. If that means the use by the population, through government, of subsidies for transport in rural areas, I am willing to stand by that and to advocate it. I hope that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) is as willing to say the same.

It is possible at present to see the impact of existing conditions on the communities of which we speak. Such communities are not only collections of people who happen to be living in an area at any given time. They also embody the culture and the cultural values of those societies. If one changes the composition of those communities or if, by indifference, one allows the composition of those communities to change, one is changing not only the very nature of the communities but the culture itself.

The latest population projections for rural Wales are that deaths will exceed births in those areas for the rest of the century. It is anticipated that there will be a rise in population — indeed, the Government's amendment to the Opposition motion speaks of a rising population. But where will this rise in population come from? It will come from outsiders moving into the area. In Dyfed, for example, inward migration may be as high as 2 per cent. per year.

Unless the Government shed their complacency and stop believing that the very existence of public services is a challenge to their virility, our country villages and small towns will be transformed into dormitory areas for the affluent young who work some distance away and retirement havens for the affluent elderly. Unless local employment and local services exist, one will abandon an all-age population structure in much of rural Wales.

Let me give some examples in support of that. In Wales, the proportion of retired to those at work is 31 to 100, but in Gwynedd at present it is 38 to 100, in Powys it is 35 to 100, and in Clwyd and Dyfed it is 34 to 100. All the rural communities have more retired people to working population than the Welsh average. That imbalance will worsen unless the Government stop destroying healthy communities for the many in favour of healthy bank balances for the few.

We must devote more public resources to increase opportunities locally of education, jobs, health and shopping. We must increase transport provision and adopt imaginative ideas, such as the social car plan, that will enable an immobile population to get to necessary services.

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): The hon. Gentleman will be aware that many Welsh people who have worked all their lives in other parts of the United Kingdom have planned to retire in parts of Wales. I presume that the hon. Gentleman does not object to that.

Mr. John: Of course I do not object. However, I do object if the burden of retired people in any area so unbalances the structure of the population that it produces an unhealthy rather than a healthy society. I object if that happens because a Government, through indifference,

[Mr. John]

force away the young people, particularly young people with families, because there are no jobs or schools for them locally, and there are no surgeries and no health provision. If the Government provide all those services and allow the choice to be a completely free one, then I agree—let people come to enjoy the beauties of Wales in retirement. But, for heaven's sake, let us not drive one segment of the population out through benign neglect and then pretend that we are being hard if we draw attention to the fact that an abnormal number of retired people are coming into the area. The hon. Member for Ynys Môn will know that the problem of an imbalance of elderly people in an area imposes a great strain on hospital and medical services which is insupportable in view of the present provision of such services in rural Wales.

Above all, the Government must be seen to be active in shaping the future of rural Wales rather than appearing, as they do at present, as rather bored spectators of inexorable decline.

On 24 May 1985 there was a feature on the Secretary of State by the political correspondent of the *Western Mail* in which the following paragraph appeared:

"Mr. Edwards is allowed his limited freedom of action in the Principality—to subvert Thatcherite policies if necessary—as the reward for unswerving loyalty to the leader on the great national issues of the day."

We have to know now whether that estimate of his powers is true. If it is not, I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will hasten to tell us, if only to avoid disappointment, but if it is true, then it is an opportunity and a challenge. By ignoring Thatcherite policies, the Welsh Office can start to strengthen rural Wales, giving us a vision of the future rather less hellish than the one we currently see. Alternatively, the right hon. Gentleman can choose not to exercise this power and, by his inertia, increase the spiral of decline in rural Wales.

All those who value Wales as a living organism, as a cultural heritage and as a trust to be passed on to future generations must call upon the right hon. Gentleman in the terms of the motion to wipe the sleep from his eyes and begin to lead the fight back.

4.25 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. John Stradling Thomas): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'recognises the difficulties faced by the farming industry and by rural communities in a period of change, but welcomes the reversal of the long period of depopulation in much of rural Wales, and supports the continued efforts of the Government to improve the services provided and to develop employment opportunities in the countryside.'.

Our debate on rural communities in Wales today will lack the contribution from Tom Hooson that we would have had in different circumstances. As I think all hon. Members will agree, he was a great friend and defender of the rural areas of Wales, and he will be sorely missed.

Having listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John), I am sure that Tom Hooson would have regretted as much as I do the terms of the motion in the name of the Opposition. The terms are vague—as was the speech of the hon. Gentleman—ill-defined and do nothing to recognise the strengths of rural areas in Wales and the considerable developments there in recent years.

On the other hand, our policies are clear and effective. We must of course—there will be agreement on this point—continue to guard against depopulation. The hon. Gentleman in my view got himself into a slight trap. On the one hand, he says that we are driving people out, and on the other hand, despite the demographic points that he made, he says that outsiders are flooding in. He cannot have it both ways. We must ensure that the local economy draws from as wide a base of activities as possible, and we must recognise the need to sustain the social, cultural and environmental fabric. I agree with the cultural point made by the hon. Gentleman.

I think it is right to say that a debate on rural communities in Wales should start with agriculture. Milk quotas have dominated the past year. The hon. Gentleman was very critical of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and of the quota scheme, but in fact the main objectives of the outgoers scheme in England and Wales have been achieved. The majority of Welsh producers will benefit from the decision to bring back the quota of small producers to the 1983 production levels. Quota awarded by the tribunal fo exceptional hardship will also be met in full. Dairy producers will welcome the outcome of the common agricultural policy negotiations. A 1·5 per cent. increase in support prices is accompanied by a 1 per cent. fall in co-responsibility levy payable in 1985-86. I would be the first to recognise that difficulties remain. We are reviewing the situation to see what can be done, but, as is obvious to everybody, the room for manoeuvre is bound to be limited.

On beef and sheep, we have secured the continuation of the support mechanisms and successfully resisted the imposition of measures that would discriminate against United Kingdom producers. We have secured a significant amelioration of unsatisfactory aspects of the seasonal scale for sheepmeat. The industry has welcomed the increase in the wool guarantee price for the 1985 clip. Consumers will benefit from supplies of both lamb and beef at reasonable prices which would otherwise go to supplement the intervention stocks. There are lessons to be learnt from our recent experience. Sheep farmers demonstrated last year how responsive they can be to market signals. There was a decided shift in the marketing of Welsh lamb, especially leaner lamb, to take advantage of the higher prices available early and late in the season. Despite the problems they have faced, dairy farmers are adjusting their patterns of production to the quota. The hon. Gentleman recognised none of those facts, which are absolutely essential to any debate on rural economy.

The new structures regulation has been widely welcomed. Assistance to farmers in the less-favoured areas will be continued. Fifteen thousand Welsh farmers now qualify for assistance following successful negotiation of the redefinition of the area in 1984. The industry has welcomed the wider grant coverage that is possible under the regulation. Decisions on the new capital grants scheme will be made shortly. That is not a picture of inertia or complacency, but of realistic action. — *[Interruption.]* I am not saying that everything is all right. There are many problems. However, it is not the picture of inertia or complacency suggested in the Opposition motion.

Mr. John: Does the Minister recognise that many people in Wales, including both the farming unions, are desperately waiting for the Government to indicate what

the future of agriculture in Wales will be? If the Government are not being complacent in refusing to issue a White Paper and to give guidance, what is the explanation?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: It is not a question of complacency. As was clear from the hon. Gentleman's speech, he has not one original idea or contribution to make, despite his strictures on milk quotas. It would be easy to rush in and produce White Papers or even to delay them. It is a fast-changing situation. Everyone agrees that there must be proper reform of the CAP. We are in Europe. Those facts must be recognised in the current position.

The impact of the new development of the paper mill at Shotton will be to create nearly 400 jobs either in or serving the mill and to provide a firm market for more than 800 people in the United Kingdom forestry industry. That is a development of first importance.

There is further evidence of our commitment to realistic action in the work of the three development agencies in encouraging enterprise in rural communities. Under our policies, growth is being stimulated within existing towns. The aim is to have self-sustaining communities as a centre and economic anchor for their surrounding areas.

Newtown has become a thriving community. Unemployment rates have remained consistently below the average for Wales. My right hon. Friend was especially pleased recently to be able to approve proposals to develop a major factory which will be used by Laura Ashley Ltd. as its base for a new phase of development resulting in 500 jobs and protecting 1,200 jobs in and around Mid-Wales.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): In speaking of the activities of the Welsh Development Agency in Wales, will the Minister confirm that it is his Department's intention to privatise the commercial investment section of the WDA next year?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: No, Sir. To the best of my knowledge that is a piece of fiction. I have no way of confirming any such thing—*[Interruption.]* As others have said at this Dispatch Box, wait and see. I cannot confirm any such thing.

In total, some 6,500 job opportunities have been brought to mid-Wales through factories which Mid-Wales Development either owns or has sold. A further 800 will follow from factories now under construction or at an advanced stage of planning.

Since 1980 the Welsh Development Agency has completed over 200 new factories in rural Gwynedd, Clwyd and Dyfed. The provision of rural sites and factories now concentrates on smaller-scale units for the benefit of local industries, and in Gwynedd the agency has built rural workshops to provide premises for craft-based industries.

The agency has also been involved with the Wales tourist board in the sponsorship of tourism studies. Tourism is particularly important to rural areas and the Wales tourist board is hard at work in promotion and in giving advice and financial assistance over a wide area, including farm tourism.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd made some points about education provision. Let us look at the facts, not the misrepresentations. First, in real terms, expenditure on education in Wales has been virtually constant over the past five years — despite the massive fall in public numbers. Secondly, expenditure on education per pupil is higher now in real terms than ever before. Thirdly, pupil-teacher ratios are at their best ever level. Fourthly, in a period of continually falling rolls, the education service in Wales has not only been maintained, as is clear from HMI reports but in many respects improved.

Of course I understand the problems of that local education authorities face in ensuring the most effective use of resources, including village schools, to secure what is in the best educational interests of our children, especially in sparsely populated areas. The answer must be founded in realism. The crucial need is to provide a system of education suited to the ages, abilities and aptitudes of the young people concerned. That may cause problems in the very small schools in our rural areas, and it is for that reason that we are supporting projects designed to improve the quality and range of the curriculum in such schools, as well as funding a research project in Powys that is looking at ways of supporting groups of small rural primary schools in a reasonable and cost-effective way.

Mr. Peter Hubbard-Miles (Bridgend): Does my hon. Friend agree that the standard of education depends to a great extent on the standard of teaching? Would not the standards of teaching in certain areas of Wales be greatly improved if the appointments system were taken out of the hands of politicians and put into the hands of the professionals? It should not be allowed to continue in the way supported by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers).

Mr. Stradling-Thomas: I know that that is a vexed question in many areas, not least in my hon. Friend's home patch.

Mr. John: If I accept what the Minister has said about the gradual improvement in funding under this Government, and how they will put matters rights, may I ask when the quarter of Powys schools and the 40 per cent. of Dyfed schools that are pre-1903 will start to be replaced?

Mr. Stradling-Thomas: The hon. Gentleman made great play in his speech of pre-1903 schools. It is the quality of provision with which we are concerned, not the age of the building. That is not a vital symbol. As resources become available, development in that direction, which is highly desirable, will continue—*[Interruption.]* As a matter of fact, almost every school that I attended was pre-1903—indeed, some were pre-1600.

Education cannot be divorced from training—we are planning one of the most dramatic increases ever undertaken in the quantity and quality of training in both urban and rural areas. Our aim is to bring more training, better training and, above all, more relevant training closer to the people who want it and the industries that need it.

To take specific examples, next year alone we plan in Dyfed, Gwynedd, Powys and Clwyd an increase of well over 60 per cent. in the number of people trained. More generally, there are grants to help employers train and upgrade the skills of the work force; training for enterprise to help small businesses and those planning to set up such businesses to establish themselves and grow; access to information technology for adults as well as for the young people who have up to now so clearly benefited from such

[Mr. Stradling-Thomas]

training; and the extension of open access to technical education and training mainly for technicians and supervisors.

As part of these plans we have carried out a thorough-going review of the role of skillcentres. The existing skillcentre network needs to be rationalised, and in the context of this debate on rural communities I wish to say something about training in the area served by the Llanelli skillcentre.

It is our view, after careful consideration of all the arguments advanced by local interests, that the needs of the area of Dyfed currently served by the Llanelli skillcentre can be better and more effectively met by using local college and employer-based facilities, together with private trainers and making more use of the skillcentre at Port Talbot. It is intended to retain a smaller skillcentre training agency presence at Llanelli, probably at the Llanelli technical college, and to expand the use being made of the MSC-funded information technology centre in the town.

I do not for a second deny that for a small number of people, many of whom in any case already board away from home while training, some extra travelling will be involved. However, for the vast majority of people in the Llanelli area, in the area served by the west Gwent skillcentre, which is also to close, and throughout Wales, these plans offer a wider range of better training nearer home than at present.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): How will the closure of the skillcentre whose specific purpose was to provide for the mid-valley area in west Gwent bring training nearer to home when there is in everybody's estimation no adequate replacement for a skillcentre like that at that point?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: We will be expanding the facilities at Newport. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the local authority at Blaenau Gwent has a facility at the Tafarnaubach opportunities centre. In addition, discussions are going on with Gwent local education authority to make provision which in many cases will mean less travelling although I cannot say that in every instance. Also, we have made sure that the skill training agency and the training division of the MSC are prepared to be extremely flexible about timing and also to consider the extra cost involved for individuals who are put at a disadvantage.

In regard to transport, of course I agree that adequate provision for transport, both public and private, is vital for the future of our rural communities. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) will recall once again that when he was Under-Secretary of State for Wales in 1977 he held a symposium at Aberystwyth to discuss what he described as a

"steady decline in rural transport services".

Since then, of course, the decline has continued so that we now face a much greater problem than he did.

Mr. Kinnock: The services are being terminated.

Mr. Stradling Thomas: It is against this background of continuing decline that we have put so much emphasis upon taking positive steps to make radical and lasting improvements to public transport services such as the support for railways announced by my right hon. Friend in the Welsh Grand Committee on 15 May. British Rail has also recently announced that it has already spent £1·3 million on strengthening the Barmouth viaduct and that these works are to be completed in May 1986. These major investments will mean better, more cost-effective services for the rural communities served.

Mr. Best: Will my hon. Friend say whether the view of the Leader of the Opposition that rural transport in Wales is to be terminated is commensurate with the announcement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the Welsh Grand Committee on 15 May that £100,000 will be provided for the Mid-Wales and Cambrian line and £76,000 for the central Wales line from Mid-Wales Development? Is that commensurate with the knowledge of the Leader of the Opposition or does he need to do a little more homework?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I would say that it is not commensurate.

In regard to buses, our efforts are concentrated on the proposals contained in the Transport Bill. I do not accept the amendment that has been tabled on the Order Paper in the name of the Alliance. Our proposals will help to improve and modernise rural transport by encouraging new, more responsive services which are often better suited to rural areas than the conventional big bus, and by introducing a system of competitive tendering for subsidy, thereby ensuring that local authorities get better value for the subsidies they will be continuing to provide. A point was made earlier about cross-subsidy. It has never seemed to me that there is any logic in relatively low income people in some areas having to cross-subsidise perhaps better-off people in other areas.

Our proposal for an innovation grant will act as a pump primer for new transport schemes for rural areas. The hon. Member for Pontypridd said that he wanted imaginative ideas. I am sure he welcomes the innovation grant. In addition, to ensure continuity of services during the transition from the old to the new system, we are making available £50 million over four years in Great Britain as a whole in the form of a transitional rural bus grant. In the first full year this grant will amount to £20 million.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the Minister of State tell us how he expects such an innovation grant to help in the provision of continuing services for routes which are uneconomic anyway? What is the use of an innovation grant rather than a continuing grant? Secondly, will he tell us when we shall hear that a decent road is to be provided across mid-Wales for the public transport services to run on?

Mr. Stradling Thomas: The innovation grant is intended to encourage new ideas to find out what profitable and imaginative schemes——

Mr. Alex Carlile: Everyone knows the answer to that.

Mr. Stradling Thomas: The hon. Gentleman may be omniscient but I certainly think that the day of the big bus trundling empty round country lanes is finished. Therefore, new and imaginative ideas, as called for by the hon. Member for Pontypridd, will be encouraged by the innovation grant. It is not meant to sustain the system ad infinitum. As the hon. Gentleman will know, a massive road building programme is laid down in "Roads in Wales". We are proceeding as rapidly as possible with that and hope in the not-too-distant future to provide better information and more up-to-date facts.

Health was referred to by the hon. Member for Pontypridd. The Government have remained committed to the development of hospital services in Wales with full regard to the needs of rural areas. The new district general hospital at Bangor is now fully open and those at Wrexham, Bridgend and Morriston are in their final stages of building and all should be open within a year. These hospitals have a wide rural catchment area. The community hospital at Mold has been open for over a year and has received wide acclaim. Construction of the new community hospital at Ystradgynlais is well under way and should be completed early next year. Those hospitals allow people to be treated nearer their homes when they do not require the more highly specialised facilities of a district general hospital. All those major developments have been funded by my Department.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Does the Minister agree that it was not sensible for the West Glamorgan area health authority to decide to close the casualty department at the Singleton hospital? That has deprived constituents from virtually the whole of the Gower peninsula. The tourist inflow into that area in the summer will make it extremely difficult, in terms of time, for people to reach the accident centre at Morriston hospital.

Mr. Stradling Thomas: I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman is making. He will be aware that it is a matter for decision by the area health authority. For us to spend our time second-guessing at the Dispatch Box is not the appropriate way to proceed.

My analysis has concentrated mainly on what is being done by way of public sector support to help encourage and stimulate the private sector. The Opposition will try to deny that this is a success story in difficult changing circumstances. They are wrong, and they will not succeed. The infrastructure is being developed. A wider range of industrial and service employment is being created while agriculture will continue its central contribution to the way of life and work. Most rural communities, far from being under threat, can now look forward to a future in which the prospect is not of migration but of increasing opportunities and a better quality of life.

I commend the amendment to the House.

4.50 pm

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): This Session, the House cannot have heard a more complacent speech from a Minister opening a debate of this kind than that of the Minister of State. If we were at the Royal Welsh show as opposed to the House of Commons, I am confident that the Minister would receive first prize for complacency. He would have the blue riband and be led around the grandstand, because he has failed to recognise that there is any problem in rural Wales.

I was born in rural Wales, most of my education was in rural Wales, and my home is in rural Wales. I therefore have some knowledge of what goes on. The economy is bound up with three aspects of our life there. The first is agriculture and forestry, the second is tourism and the third is small industry. I leave on one side the service industries, local government, the universities and some defence work. There is nothing constant in this world, but some things are more constant than others. There is a greater degree of inconstancy and uncertainty in the three primary points to which I have referred.

I shall deal immediately with agriculture as a supplement to what was said so well by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John). Agriculture in Wales feels that it has been let down badly. It has no confidence in the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or in the Secretary of State for Wales. They fail to recognise a growing problem and when they went to speak in Brussels allegedly on behalf of British agriculture, they failed miserably. The result was that action had to be taken far too quickly, without preparation and with insufficient warning to the industry. That caused misery and agony in the dairy industry.

If the Minister is unaware of the deep feelings in the Welsh dairy industry, he has no idea of what is happening in Welsh agriculture. The result has been a loss of confidence. It is all very well for him to say that he is confident about the future of Welsh agriculture, but when it comes down to pounds and pence would he today be able to put his hand on his heart and say to Welsh farmers that the climate for investment was right? If he is confident of that, will he firmly say in what sector it is right to invest?

Yesterday, we had a problem, which remains, with the over-production of milk. Today, the problem is cereals but that does not affect us so much. Tomorrow, the problem for beef and lamb will be much greater, I fear. I welcome every effort that is made to improve the quality, availability and attraction of Welsh lamb on the continent, where I believe there is a growing market.

The Minister must recognise that there is a change in people's eating habits. People are going off fats. If one talks to young people today, one finds that there is a tremendous growth in vegetarianism. There is a reaction against red meat. It is therefore time for the Government to recognise that today's fads may well be tomorrow's fashions. Welsh agriculture should receive some sign of where it is to go, upon what it should concentrate and what its prime aims in the future should be. It cannot afford a cut in another part of its production without greater hardships. When the Minister says that dairy farmers are adjusting, he means that they are tightening their belts.

In the Welsh countryside, we are all aware that the dependence upon agriculture is not solely that of the farmer or his farm worker; there is a four to one dependence, which was the factor that we used. When we add the carpenter, the schoolteacher, the cabinet maker and the rest there is a repercussive effect upon the agricultural economy. If the Minister goes to a garage, a shop, a restaurant or anywhere else in rural Wales, as I hope he will during the summer recess, everyone will tell him how tight are the belts in rural Wales and what the repercussive effects of the difficulties are upon agriculture.

The Government have had to cave in to the position in Brussels, but they must recognise that they have done agriculture a great disservice by not warning it sufficiently or taking adequate steps in time. Are they prepared for the next round of cuts in whatever product that may be? Will they give the industry sufficient warning in the future so that there can be planning and so that those young people who want to invest in agriculture can do so with confidence? I see the reports of the prices that farms are fetching, and the picture that I have is one of a lack of confidence in agriculture in rural Wales.

I come now to the problem of transport in rural Wales. In the old days, Brecon and Radnor had the highest proportion of car owners in the country. Car ownership

[Mr. John Morris]

then was not a luxury; it was a necessity because there was no other means of transport for dozens of people. When the head of the household has to use the family car to go to work because there is no other transport, the wife, the youngsters and the elderly are left with no transport. I welcome the innovations that we have heard described today, given that the Government are pursuing their philosophical dogma and selling the nation's buses and having a free-for-all under the Transport Bill.

What kind of transport will remain in rural Wales? Will the valleys in which I grew up remain as I know them? Will the valleys in the old counties of Cardigan and Carmarthen and the west of mid-Wales remain as other families know them? Will there be more or less transport in those areas? The Minister should be honest and tell the House that, whatever innovation there is, whatever piece of plaster is put on the wound, there will be greater deprivation in rural Wales. That is a great tragedy of the Transport Bill.

There has always been cross-subsidisation in rural Wales. It is written into the electricity legislation. If cross-subsidisation were not applied to the Post Office, letters to rural Wales would be charged at five times the price of those to urban London. If that is the Government's free market philosophy, it could mean that life in mid-Wales and rural Wales would not be a life worth living for anyone except the extremely affluent who had the resources to look after their own affairs. The poor will be driven out and these areas will become reservations in which the rich may enjoy themselves. They will be playgrounds for people from the urban communities and those who have the necessary affluence to afford basic services.

I commend the work of various chairmen and members of the Wales tourist board. How do the resources of the Wales tourist board compare with those of the English tourist board and the Scottish tourist board? Do we receive our fair share of the money available for tourism? I hope that the Minister can put me out of my misery and tell me that we in Wales receive more than our fair share for tourism. I hope that the hon. Gentleman fights a fair fight, and I would be happy if he were to tell me that that was so. I would, however, be surprised to hear it.

Could not a little more be done with respect to innovation? On Saturday, I heard the suggestion that the Wales tourist board could do more for fishing, which is an enormous attraction in the Principality. I declare an interest as an occasional angler. I know that there are some problems and that we cannot fish the number of fish that were available in the past. During the past few years, the catch has not been all that good. There have been suggestions that a small area could be set aside for a man-made lake providing employment and offering fishing facilities. If we had the resources of the Wales tourist board, the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Welsh Development Agency, encouragement from the Welsh Office and funds from Brussels, we might be able to do more.

The Government have nothing to their credit with respect to innovations in machinery to deal with the problems of Wales. The Labour Government set up the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales. But for those prime weapons, this Government would have no machinery to deal with the problems of Wales.

Sir Raymond Gower: What about investment?

Mr. Morris: The hon. Gentleman may make his speech in his own time. The machinery which I have described and the economic activities which are not encouraged were decried by the present Secretary of State for Wales when the measure were put before the House.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): Surely my right hon. and learned Friend is not surprised at this, in view of the fact that a number of Conservative Members voted in the Welsh Grand Committee against setting up those institutions.

Mr. Morris: My hon. Friend was the Whip on those occasions. Conservative Members opposed the setting up of the WDA when we tried to get the matter speedily passed through the House. The Wales TUC carried a resolution deploring the activities on the Floor of the House. The present Secretary of State for Wales initially opposed the formation of the Development Board for Rural Wales, but realised that that was a mistake and eventually went along with the idea. No new machinery has been developed since then. Without the weapons of the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales, the Government's cupboard would be bare.

I am grateful to my right hon. Friends who were in the Labour Cabinet for accepting my views on the need for WDA. They gave me every support in setting up that body and giving it the necessary resources. I felt, however, that mid-Wales needed more. Thirty-two years ago last Saturday, when I was 21, I came down from university and was asked at a young farmers' rally whether I would like to be the parliamentary Labour candidate for the county of Cardigan. I went to the selection panel, having been asked by a distinguished "Cardi" to accept the candidacy. I had to do my military service, so the constituency rightly rejected me. I made my speech at that meeting on the basis of a famous report by a distinguished Welshman, H. T. Edwards, who was chairman of the Council of Wales. He said that a statutory board was required to deal with the problems of mid-Wales. It was my great privilege more than 20 years later to put that into effect and to carry out the promise I made at that conference.

Not many people wanted that board. The provision was not in any party policy. The Welsh Office and the present Secretary of State did not want it. I discovered, after three awful months, that the man in the Welsh Office who was supposed to be organising the matter, had been taken off the job. If I had not realised that and had not taken immediate steps to correct the position, the legislation would not have been ready in time. That was one of the few occasions on which I blew my top in the Welsh Office. I had Eric Varley's support. He recognised the needs. All the difficulties in the Department of Trade and Industry were overridden, and the body was established.

The Welsh Development Agency was necessary because I believed that it could tackle the major problems of Wales. Something more than a broad-brush approach was needed in mid-Wales. We needed the fine touch of the paint brush. We needed a few thousand pounds here and there to prime the pump in the rural community. We were afraid that depopulation would occur in rural Wales to such an extent that we could not put the clock back. If the population comprised only the elderly, with no one able

to earn his livelihood, the cost of providing social services would be so enormous that it would mean the end of the road for mid-Wales.

I very much welcome the arresting of the depopulation trend in some parts of Wales. We must, however, analyse the age of the population and ascertain the extent to which the arrest has been caused by people retiring to rural Wales rather than by the retention of people in that area. Only a tiny minority of the people who were in the same form as I was in Aberyswyth are still earning their livelihood in the old county of Cardigan. We have continued to lose our life blood. Major steps were taken with the Development Board for Rural Wales. I was convinced that only a statutory board could solve the problems. The development of Newtown is a shining example of the improvements. The DBRW needs more resources. If it had those resources, it could provide those pockets of industry that would enable the quality of life to be changed in many parts of the community.

Lack of resources is the problem in mid-Wales. I believe passionately that, such is the quality of life in that area, with a little help—I am not talking about a lot of money—something could be done to achieve a better balance of population. I fear that rural Wales will have an aging population, and not a broad-based population able to hold its own and provide sufficient employment for the best of its young people. For far too many years, we have educated for export. That is why we have lost so many of the best of our young people. Until I am convinced that we have done more than merely arrest the depopulation trend, and have provided job opportunities to retain more young people, I shall not be confident about rural Wales.

I hope that I have underlined the point that, even if the Minister of State is not concerned about the problems of rural Wales, many of us are. It is not the time for complacency. Years of work must be done to ensure that the clock is put back and that there is a thriving community. It will take years for agriculture to recover from the damaging blows during the past few years. It will be years before people have the necessary confidence to invest in it in Wales. We must ensure that, whatever the crisis—perhaps because of problems of over-production in other industries—funds are available. Vitality, funds, drive, imagination and investment are needed for Wales to cope with the problems that may occur during the next few years.

5.9 pm

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): Without detracting from what the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) did for mid-Wales, I am sure that he would agree that he was greatly assisted by the self-help groups which had set up an organisation there before Mid-Wales Development was created and which had done extremely valuable work.

Mr. John Morris: I certainly accept that. I built the Development Board for Rural Wales on that basis, and incorporated on the initial board some of the distinguished people who had served on those bodies.

Sir Raymond Gower: To that extent, I subscribe to what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said, but the foundations had been laid by the self-help initiatives of the county councils.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) misled the House when he asked for a White Paper. He spoke as though we were not in Europe, and almost gave the impression that we need not conduct difficult international negotiations before deciding on many of those changes.

Mr. John: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman knows whether we are in Europe. I am not clear whether he lives in the modern world. If I am misleading the House—that is a fairly serious charge to make—I am doing it in common with the NFU in Wales and the *Financial Times* last week. If the hon. Gentleman would read about farming, he might learn a little more.

Sir Raymond Gower: That is a facile remark which does not take us much further. The tenor of the hon. Gentleman's speech was that we could produce a White Paper now just as easily as we could have done before we joined the Community. That has the result of misleading the House.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon seems to want the Minister to be a soothsayer who can anticipate the eating habits a few years hence. It is inconceivable that we can work along those lines. He and the hon. Member for Pontypridd must know that any Minister with responsibility for agriculture is in a difficult position and must, in some respects, follow rather than lead events. It is not easy for Ministers to say what will happen next year or the year after, and I hope that hon. Members will be fair enough to accept that.

Despite the undoubted problems of the predominantly milk-producing areas, agriculture still makes a formidable contribution to the economy of the Principality. However, there will be difficulties ahead, and the hon. Member for Pontypridd was correct to say that we must expect problems in other sectors of agriculture. It is conceivable that there will be over-production in other sectors. In a Community it is difficult to anticipate future needs and to produce exactly the right amount. These are highly technical matters, and I would not condemn a Government of any party for having difficulties in this area.

Welsh farmers will have problems, but there is still a splendid future for agriculture in Wales, even taking into account the manifest difficulties owing to geographical conditions, to the fact that many of our areas have suffered for a long time from inaccessibility, and to the fact that we do not have a large proportion of the higher-grade land that can be found in some parts of the United Kingdom. In the past, many of our farmers were too small to be economic, but there has been some improvement in that respect. Much of our land is in the upland and hill-farming areas, which have benefited from the special provision that has been made by the Community for less-favoured areas.

It is noteworthy that, after about a century and a half of serious depopulation in parts of mid-Wales — especially in the old county of Montgomery, which suffered constant depopulation for well over a century—there is evidence that the worst of that has been stopped.

I echo the tributes that have been paid to Mid-Wales Development, the Welsh Development Agency and the Wales tourist board for their efforts in rural mid-Wales.

Despite the economic recession, successive Ministers in successive Governments deserve congratulations on maintaining the broad impetus of the road building programme. The extension of the M4 motorway to the west has produced great benefits to the farming areas of Dyfed, Carmarthen, Pembrokeshire and Cardigan. Similarly, north-west Wales must have benefited from the

[Sir Raymond Gower]

steady improvement in communications. I take the point of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) that the road system in mid-Wales must be improved. However, when I have driven through Powys, I have been greatly impressed by the quality of many main roads. The county council must be congratulated on them. It is an amazing achievement that so many roads have improved, and it is certainly much more pleasant and easier to drive through Builth and Llandridnod to Newtown than it was a decade ago.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Has the hon. Gentleman recently tried to drive from Powys via Wrexham to Merseyside or the Manchester area? If so, will he confirm that it is a journey which few would undertake, unless they had strong reasons for doing so, because of the appalling roads along that route?

Sir Raymond Gower: I admit that I have not done that during the past few years, but when I wished to travel that way, I usually drove to Shrewsbury and then north.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Through England.

Sir Raymond Gower: That is so. I repeat that I have been impressed by the condition of the roads in large areas of Powys.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon and the hon. Member for Pontypridd expressed their legitimate doubts about the new plans for the bus industry. However effective or ineffective they may be in other parts of Wales, it seems likely that the flexibility of the new system is almost designed to effect some improvement in rural areas. In recent years, in some parts of mid-Wales and Powys, adequate transport has been almost non-existent. Some villages have had no real bus services for a long time. The new arrangements cannot be worse than the present position, and the chances are that they will lead to an improvement. Hon. Members are on the wrong tack when they relate the future of the bus industry to the subject of today's debate, because, in this narrow area, there is a great prospect of considerable improvement.

In addition to some of the matters mentioned by the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), rural Wales, especially mid-Wales, needs continued road improvements. I would set that above many of the other things that have been referred to. The inaccessibility of so much of mid-Wales must be cured.

Parts of mid-Wales would benefit from the adoption of the methods and practice of Mid-Wales Development to adjacent areas in north-west Wales, northern Dyfed and Carmarthen. I echo the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon in that I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to give us some information about the degree of real help given by the Exchequer to the Wales tourist board. Is it having a fair deal as compared with the tourist boards in England and Scotland?

In addition, I should like continued provision of the smaller purpose-built advance factories in suitable parts of rural Wales where there is an adequate population for them. Finally, additional steps should be taken to assist the increasing number of craft industries, which are a valuable adjunct to our tourist industry. In the past, our craft industries have been poorer than those overseas. Although there has been a radical improvement in this industry in the past few years, some extra assistance here could be fruitful.

Although I am not as pessimistic as some hon. Members who have spoken, I recognise that the problems of rural Wales are considerable. Despite the world recession and our economic difficulties, matters are not nearly as bad as the right hon. and learned Gentleman suggested.

5.22 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Although I am pleased that we have been given an opportunity to debate Welsh affairs once again, it is rather disappointing that the Labour party should have asked for only half a day in which to debate such a crucial aspect of our national life.

It is a significant, not to say cynical, gesture on the part of a movement that largely ignored the rural population when in power, to decide to debate the matter at all now. The Labour party is, broadly speaking, out of sympathy with a large sector of the rural community on whose vitality and resource the economy of these areas depends —the farming community.

The Labour party has campaigned vigorously to get us out of Europe, yet, despite the several and serious shortcomings of the common agricultural policy, agriculture in Wales would be in a much worse state if we withdrew. It is interesting to note that, when a Tory Member tried to bring in a Bill to rate agricultural buildings a couple of weeks ago, the most solid support for it came from the Labour Benches. In my view, such a policy would harm Welsh farmers more than most because livestock farming which uses buildings, is important to them.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would explain why, if that is so, the Liberal-Social Democratic policy document on local government states:

"There is only one exclusion from the rating system which can no longer be justified: the derating of agricultural land and buildings. The re-rating of agriculture would strengthen the rate base of many local authorities with low resources."

Is that the policy of the alliance or is the alliance split on this as on everything else?

Mr. Howells: With respect, I was talking about the Bill which was defeated in the House only a fortnight ago. Tory and Labour Governments have been given opportunities to help farmers in hill and marginal areas, but they have been remarkably reluctant to take them. It is one thing to say today that more acres in Wales have been taken under the marginal land scheme, but the farmers of Wales know—I do not think that they will forgive Tory or Labour Governments for this—that they did not receive the full hill compensatory allowance. That was a retrograde step. Farmers should not have been penalised when the Europeans were willing to provide the money.

It is good that we have a chance to highlight the serious problems facing rural communities, despite the limited time given to the subject, because the problems have been exacerbated by mindless and insensitive Tory policies. During the past six years, Wales has been treated shamefully by the Tories and, in many respects, rural Wales has suffered as much as industrial areas.

One example of insensitivity and incompetence in policy making is the Government's dealing with the milk quota system. It is important not to underestimate the effects of the milk quota on rural Wales. Although there are now only about one quarter as many milk producers as there were 30 years ago, we now produce twice as much milk. The economy of certain areas in highly dependent on milk production. The milk quota system has hit those areas hard and farmers have suffered severe financial losses.

It is generally agreed that the tribunals set up to deal, with hardship cases have not succeeded in helping all those who need and deserve help. There are serious anomalies, and steps must be taken to amend the system so that producers receive justice. It would be helpful if the Secretary of State could tell us of any plans he may have in this direction. It is unbelievable that Ministers should say that it is all right to introduce a quota system for small dairy producers in Britain when they have no plans to introduce a quota system for cereal growers, but that is what the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said a fortnight ago.

The Government have ignored the importance of agriculture in Wales. They do not recognise the problems and have failed to give any indication of policies for the future that would help to give the industry stability. Instead, they have concentrated on cutting money for research services and have curtailed the activities of the agricultural development and advisory service. Welsh farming has special problems and is bound to suffer as a result of those cuts.

One of the Government's worst-thought-out measures this Session—and there have been many—is to be found in the Transport Bill, which is going through Parliament on the payroll vote. The privatisation of the bus networks would do untold damage in Wales. We might have efficient services connecting sparsely populated areas with villages and towns, but they would be destroyed if the Bill in enacted. So-called uneconomic routes would be ignored in the fight for lucrative long-distance or town routes and those least able to afford their own transport — the young, the unemployed seeking work, the elderly wishing to visit a doctor, a post office or shops—would be left stranded.

There is a constant attack on rural schools. With the recent Tory trend of insisting on value for money in education, more rural schools will come under threat. As these schools are closed, so the communities they serve will decline. How can one place a value on education or on community ties? Why deprive our children of a first-class amenity in the name of prudent money saving? The alliance believes that any school with two teachers or more should be kept open and that special consideration should be given to social and community aspects before deciding to close even the smallest school.

The Government's mania for so-called efficiency and cost cutting is also threatening our rural post offices and telephone kiosks. We hear daily of small sub-post offices closing in villages where there is an aging population. This forces the inhabitants to travel miles to collect their pensions and allowances. No efforts are made to find new tenants for vacant sub-post offices. In all their calculations, the Government have left out the social consequences of their scrimping and saving and they have succeeded in making the quality of life for rural dwellers much poorer.

I am also concerned about the effect on large parts of rural Wales of cuts in the National Health Service. Many patients already travel long distances for hospital care and treatment and now more local and cottage hospitals are to close. If we are to help the rural communities, it is essential that we take an enlightened view and that we spend more money on amenities and services. We must begin by restoring and improving the infrastructure, by building and maintaining better roads and encouraging the development of our rail services. This in turn could help to encourage more light industry and to provide stable and rewarding jobs for the people of the area. I am glad that the Mid-Wales development board is doing an excellent job, within the limits laid down for it. I should like to see its scope extended and its work better funded. It is essential to extend a lifeline to small business in rural areas. During the years of Tory rule, thousands of them have gone to the wall. The small business and self-employed sector is of vital importance to the economic well-being of rural Wales. Small businesses have been shabbily treated by this Government. They must be encouraged to grow and thus take on more employees.

Tourism is now an important fact of life in many rural areas. It could save the economy of many areas from foundering. The Wales tourist board has accepted the challenge. The Government should recognise that by giving special additional grants, bearing in mind the needs of Wales.

We must revitalise rural Wales. We must give it more hope by creating real jobs and by providing essential services. The Tory Government have completely failed. It is no wonder that the Welsh people rejected them so resoundingly during the recent county council elections.

The suggestion has been made today that the Government should introduce a White Paper on the future of agriculture in Wales. To restore confidence among the agricultural community in Wales we need a ten-year plan for the industry so that farmers in all sectors can plan ahead. To help young men entering agriculture, we should set up a land bank to give them special facilities, like their counterparts in Europe.

Our smallholdings system has worked well in many parts of Wales. I am proud of Dyfed county council and other counties which have not sold their smallholdings. To save the infrastructure of agriculture the Government must give extra financial aid to county councils to ensure that they provide more smallholdings for those who want to start in agriculture.

The Minister said that everything was rosy in Wales and that grants were forthcoming. Even in Powys, Brecon and Radnor farmers are aware of the cuts in grant that have been made in the last twelve months. The Government promise more cuts in the years to come. Welsh farmers should have the opportunity to use a capital grant scheme, which has worked exceptionally well in the past decade or two, or they should be able to obtain cheap credit. Farmers would have the choice if the scheme became optional. Such a system works well on the continent and our counterparts in Europe are willing for our Government to introduce such a scheme, which would be beneficial to everyone in Wales.

Now that the Secretary of State has full responsibility for Welsh agriculture he should go to Brussels to represent Welsh agriculture during negotiations on the price review. If I am wrong I am willing to be corrected, but to my

[Mr. Howells]

knowledge, he has been only once, when he negotiated the sheepmeat regime for 1979-80. It is his duty to go to Brussels on behalf of the people involved in agriculture.

There is another problem in the east Dyfed health authority area. Many beds are to go at Llanelli, Carmarthen and Aberystwyth. I hope that the Secretary of State can do something to avoid hospitals having to cut spending in the next twelve months.

The Government have said that they plan cuts worth £30 million in research establishment expenditure. Many of us are afraid that untold damage will be done to the Welsh plant breeding station at Aberystwyth. It would be a great shame because it is the only national institution of its kind in Wales. We do not think that it will be closed, but it needs to be restored so that it can continue to provide work for the people in the area. It should be available to help those who want to develop different types of grasses in the Third world.

I have received many letters lately from people who are worried about policing in the rural areas. It is a pity that crime is on the increase. Many people in the rural areas would like a different method of policing to be used. Methods are the responsibility of the chief constables, but some people believe in a more flexible policy. The police should travel in cars round the rural areas, but there is much to be said for the village bobby. In my view we need both.

Those of us who live in the rural areas are proud of our culture, heritage and language. Many of us have pressed —I have pressed in particular—that we should have a board to look after the interests of the Welsh language and its development in the years to come. It should be preserved. It is our duty to do so. I hope that the Government in their wisdom will accept the plea that has been made by many Welsh-speaking Welshmen throughout the Principality, that we should safeguard our culture and our language.

Dr. Roger Thomas (Carmarthen): Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that the Welsh Joint Education Council recently came out flatly against such a board for securing the future and even distribution of facilities for the Welsh language? I believe that it is a disappointing state of affairs and I think that the hon. Gentleman will be disappointed, too.

Mr. Howells: I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. I expected the council to say just what it did, but I believe that we need a board to look after the interests of the Welsh language.

5.41 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I am sorry that the Labour party should choose to introduce this interesting debate in the terms that it used. I am sure that at the conclusion of the debate Labour Members will be sorry about that. However, I found myself reluctantly nodding in agreement with a great deal of what the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) said about an enhanced role for the Welsh development agency. Whoever else will be glad of the debate, I am sure that the Liberal party will not wish to study too closely the report of today's proceedings, particularly the demolition of its agricultural policy by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

The story of rural Wales is in fact a success story, though Heaven knows there is plenty of room for improvement. Those of us on the Select Committee who visited mid-Wales recently during our inquiry into tourism are still in the process of making up our minds about the overall performance of the Wales tourist board, but for the work of Mid-Wales Development—or the Development Board for Rural Wales, as we used to call it—we all have nothing but praise. Of course the withdrawal of assisted area status, necessitated by the overdue rationalisation of regional policy, was a blow to its efforts, but by energy and adaptability, it has done much to overcome that, and in particular to find ways of continuing to draw support from the EEC. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will continue his efforts to make such aid available, and to extend it to those areas of rural Wales that are no longer formally designated as assisted areas.

There are limits to the expansion of industrial activity in rural Wales, though the Laura Ashley saga, which reflects the greatest possible credit on all concerned, suggests that there is still considerable scope for expansion in the right sort of manufacturing industry. But, of course, the industry where expansion is most clearly called for is tourism. It would be out of order as well as premature to discuss tourism at any length today, but we would do well to keep it at the back of our minds, for tourism, which can provide so many jobs and create so much prosperity, cannot itself flourish unless the environment and the infrastructure are adequate to nourish it. Here there is a virtuous circle that needs to be initiated.

No doubt the debate will be used to attack the Government's Transport Bill. There is an element of risk in the Bill, for unless the entrepreneurs come forward to provide the local transport services that can now be made profitable by the removal of restrictions, we shall have wrecked a poor transport system and left ourselves with nothing. I do not for one moment believe that that will happen. I am sure that there is enough wit and will in Wales to provide flexible transport services, not merely to meet the present known needs, but to create new travel opportunities for the countryside, and in the process to make that countryside more attractive to tourists.

The railways of Wales are among the major tourist attractions as well as the vital artery in the economy as a whole. The most stupid rumours are being circulated by those who ought to know better, such as the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). I am sorry to say that normally sensible local papers have been picking up those rumours and giving them currency. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has demonstrated in the most tangible fashion his support for railway lines in Wales. It should not be necessary, but I have to ask him yet again to make it perfectly plain in his winding-up speech that there is no question of closing the north Wales line or any of the other major lines in Wales.

Mr. Best: My hon. Friend will not be aware that yesterday I spoke to Mr. Harewood, the area manager based at Chester, who found it quite extraordinary that statements were being made about possible closure of the north Wales line. A large amount of investment is going into upgrading that line so that it can take trains that travel at 90 mph.

Sir Anthony Meyer: That shows how foolish it is to listen to anything said by the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich.

There are other areas where misgivings may be more justified, and if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can give any reassurance, it would be much appreciated. The first concern is smaller schools. It is hopelessly uneconomic and educationally unsatisfactory to try to keep every school open as the numbers dwindle with falling school rolls. The school is the heart of a community and the closure of a school can be a terrible blow to the spirit of that community. There are already rumours that large and successful comprehensive schools may be closed if their numbers fall below 1,000. In that climate, there is a natural anxiety that the criteria for the closure of schools in rural areas may be continuously raised until few of them qualify for survival. I ask my right hon. Friend in his winding-up speech to give me some assurance that his Department will not merely take into account — and encourage local education authorties to take into account — the cost of running the schools or even their educational efficiency, but will give some weight to the place of those schools in the life of the communities that they serve.

The other matter that worries me, which has been referred to by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) relates to sub-post offices. Some of the same considerations apply here as apply to schools. The Post Office Corporation in its entirely laudable pursuit of profitability, is now closing down a number of post offices, so far mainly in urban areas, on the grounds that they are unprofitable. I believe that that is a faulty calculation based on the concept of reducing activity until the point of profitability is reached instead of expanding until one reaches the other end of the profit curve. The closure of sub-post offices in urban areas inflicts inconvenience and occasional hardship on individuals. If such a policy of closure were extended to the countryside—I accept the assurance that so far there is no intention to do so—the consequences would be a good deal more serious. A village without a post office or a school is a poor thing, and an inexorably decaying thing.

By far the most important activity in rural Wales is agriculture. Agriculture in Wales, especially milk producing, has passed through a worrying period. The worst has not happened largely because of the dismal expectations aroused by the announcement of milk quotas. There are other worries ahead and for other sectors of agriculture. Welsh farming has done well in past years out of the common agricultural policy, and much of it is still doing well. It is within a common agricultural policy for Europe that the best future for Welsh agriculture lies. However, the immense and insuperable difficulty of getting decisions out of the Common Market makes it impossible for Ministers to operate the changes that would enable agriculture in Wales to make a far greater and better directed contribution to the well-being of the countryside by, for example, concentrating subsidies much more on the less favoured areas, and by reducing the excessive prices paid for crops or production already in surplus. However, it is not for those who stoutly defend the right of each member state to veto a decision which it may find mildly inconvenient, to complain that the EC has been reduced to paralysis and that the common agricultural policy is not contributing as it should to the well-being of the countryside. I have never concealed my view. If we want the EC to work—there is no point in being in it, if we do not—we must accept far more limitations on our right of veto than any Minister seems ready to contemplate. If the Liberal party takes that as a sign of approval for some of its policies, it is the only sign of approval that it will get from me today.

One thing is certain: rural Wales gets a better deal from a Conservative Government than it would from a Labour Government, who would knock the props from agriculture and lay heavy burdens on it, or from an alliance Government, who, we learn, would impose other such burdens on agriculture, and who have yet to show that they can sustain the long-term policies necessary to revitalise the countryside, or from Plaid Cymru, whose policies would cut Wales off from the desperately needed flow of outward investment. I have no hesitation in supporting the Government amendment.

5.51 pm

Dr. Donald Coleman (Neath): Both the Minister and the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) referred to the halt in the depopulation of mid-Wales. It is to be welcomed, and they welcomed it, as I do. When I first came to the House we established the Welsh Office. Our first Secretary of State for Wales, James Griffiths, made it his work to ensure that the depopulation of Mid-Wales should and must be halted. He was undoubtedly given the most expert advice on the matter from no less a person than the late Tudor Watkins, who represented Brecon and Radnor for a long time, and knew the problems of mid-Wales and its counties well.

Our motion condemns the Government's complacency. We listened to the Minister of State, whom the Opposition regard as both likeable and affable, introducing the subject, but, despite our kind feelings and thoughts towards him, I must agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), who accused him of complacency. I found nothing to convince me that the Government were as serious as they should be about the problems of rural Wales.

The motion goes on to talk about the need for a change in Government policies towards rural communities in Wales. Almost a year ago I listened intently, as I always do, during a debate in the Welsh Grand Committee about rural affairs in Wales. Many hon. Members drew the attention of the Secretary of State for Wales to the problems that were created by last summer's drought, especially its serious effect on the rural communities in Wales. I re-read the report of that debate, and it does not seem that members of the Committee were satisfied with the answers that they received from the right hon. Gentleman. Each of us hopes that we shall have the benefit of fine weather again this year, but we do not want a repeat of the experience that was complained of in the Welsh Grand Committee last year.

When the Minister replies to the debate, it is not too much to expect from him an assurance that the problems caused by the drought last year will not take place this year if we are fortunate enough to have a long dry spell this summer. We want to hear from him that the Welsh water authority has made funds available to implement the work known to be needed to avoid the problems of drought, especially in rural areas.

The rural areas are places of exceptional beauty, and living in them should be nothing short of idyllic. Unfortunately, the Government and their policies are as

[Dr. Donald Coleman]

much a blight on those rural areas as on urban areas. Many of the problems are the same, but many are intensified in their effect in rural areas. The Transport Bill, which is now in another place, is an example of that. Indeed, hon. Members have already alluded to it today.

People in rural areas cannot be confident that under the new legislation the existing network of bus services in rural areas will survive. When the process of privatisation gets under way and the National Bus Company disappears from our roads, there can be no certainty that a benevolent privateer will jump in to provide the bus services, poor as they may be in rural areas. The poor and the elderly will be returned to the Prime Minister's much-loved Victorian times when the boundaries of their world were the distance that they could walk.

Supporters of the Government have expressed their conviction that privatisation of bus services will provide a better and cheaper service in rural areas. They are certainly easy to convince, but perhaps it is because their experience of these matters is limited. From my experience of the valleys of my constituency, many of which are semi-rural, I do not see the chances of rural areas as being bright. If there is not a publicly owned operation which is required by statute to provide services, and if one thinks that a privateer will do so, one is whistling in the dark. Because of the Government's transport policy, rural communities will find themselves having to pay fewer bus fares, but greater shoe repair bills.

I shall touch briefly on another matter of Government policy which will cause serious trouble in rural areas, if it is implemented. In his recent Budget statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer foreshadowed the dismantling of the wages councils. On Sunday new minimum wage rates for farm workers came into effect. The workers should ponder whether this will be the last time that they will have such an award, and whether the future will return them to the bad old times that they experienced in the past. They should concentrate their minds on that.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) talked about the culture of Wales. Within the upper regions of the Swansea valley the Craig-y-Nos hospital is about to close. It was the home of Adelina Patti. Proposals have been made which would ensure that that building, in a beautiful rural setting, could be used for the advancement of culture, and to promote the study of the area. Some parts of the building could be used for the establishment of rural industries. But we are being told by the Government and by the Welsh Office that the building must appear in the auctioneer's catalogue and be sold to the highest bidder. Yet it is part of our cultural heritage in Wales, and we have the right to expect a different attitude to be taken to it. Therefore, I urge the Secretary of State to look carefully at the proposals and to preserve that part of our national heritage.

A year ago there were complaints that the decline in rural Wales was continuing. There were indications of it in the reduction in the number of agricultural workers and in the reduction in educational opportunities in the rural areas. Churches and chapels and even public houses were closing. There has been nothing from the Government in the debate today to indicate to us or to the Welsh people and those who live in the Welsh rural communities that the decline has either halted or decreased. We have been made aware, as I have tried to demonstrate, and as other hon. Members have, that Government policies are under consideration which will make the situation even worse.

I hope that people in the rural areas of Wales will take note of the debate and will recognise that they are part of the Government's policy of neglect which has left Britain a very much worse off place than it was when the Government came on the scene in 1979. The only remedy for that neglect will be to get rid of the Government as soon as is possible.

6.2 pm

Mr. Robert Harvey (Clwyd, South-West): I shall be very brief, because this seems to me to be a most curious debate. A deep concern for the countryside has not been evident in Labour party pronouncements in the past. Farming is still a major producer of wealth in rural Wales. Even though only 4 per cent. of the Clwyd labour force is directly employed in it, the prosperity and jobs that it generates go much wider.

What is Labour party policy on agriculture? The indignation that emanated from the Labour benches when milk quotas were imposed — to cheers from the Strangers' Gallery from Dyfed farmers—would lead one to assume that the Opposition were determined to maintain food surpluses, would keep in being the old dairy arrangements, and would go on allowing producers to expand as if there were no tomorrow. Yet what would the Labour party do? The answer that we heard from the Labour Front Bench today was not altogether clear.

At a *Financial Times* conference last year, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said bluntly:

> "We can reduce the number of products which are covered by guarantee, and we can cut the guarantee to an economically justifiable level. More important, we can begin an assault on surplus capacity, reducing rather than increasing the amount of uneconomic production."

That at least has the virtue of honesty. The position taken by Conservative Members is that, in view of the economic contribution that farming makes to the rural communities, the cuts should be as small and as gradual as possible, although in my view the cuts imposed last year went too far. But the Labour position is that "an assault" should be made on farming incomes, on the very lifeblood of our rural communities. I wonder what is now the attitude of the Labour party to the repeated resolutions for the nationalisation of the land passed at Labour party conferences. Is nationalisation of the land official Labour party policy or is it not? The rural communities of Wales deserve an answer.

I am glad to see that even Labour Members have welcomed the retention of the beef variable premium, and recognise the staggering victory that was achieved by the Government in the recent settlement on land when a concerted EEC attack on the price was beaten off. That will be a major reassurance to the hill farmers of rural Wales.

The other lifeline of our rural communities is tourism. Tourism in our Principality is growing apace, thanks to Government action in encouraging the small business sector, in raising the threshold at which small businesses pay tax, and in easing the employment protection legislation that prevents them from growing.

Much has been said about bus services in the debate. The fact remains that bus services have been declining steadily under the existing system, which has encouraged

high fares, high subsidies and fewer services. The hope —I recognise that it is only a hope—arising from the Transport Bill must be that a more competitive bus system can halt the decline in the vital services to the neediest people in our rural communities.

It is hard to fault the Government's record on roads. The A470, A465, A40, A47, A438, A48, A487 and A55 have all helped to open up rural Wales. The straightening and widening of roads in rural areas such as Powys has indeed gone beyond the point at which it might be environmentally desirable.

With regard to railways, the £176,000 recently pledged for the improvement of the mid-Wales and Cambrian lines must be taken as a vote of confidence in the future of those services, which so admirably serve rural areas. However, any attempt by British Rail to single-track the Chester to Shrewsbury line would be a hammer blow to the urban and rural communities along that line, which serves a great deal of Wales, and I urge the Secretary of State to do everything in his power to influence British Rail on the matter.

Our record in helping rural communities is admirable, and I hope that it will lead to—

Mr. Alex Carlile: The hon. Gentleman says that the Government's record in helping rural areas is admirable.

Through his rose-coloured glasses, will he tell us the admirable reasons which have led to Powys being the only county in Wales which is no longer eligible for assistance from the European social fund?

Mr. Harvey: I have outlined in great detail the areas in which the Government's record is extremely favourable. I have some doubts about the way in which regional support was changed, and I have expressed those doubts in the Welsh Grand Committee. Nevertheless, the overall position has been one of considerable success in regenerating the rural communities of Wales.

I urge the Secretary of State to look at one other area in which he might contribute to helping the rural communities in Wales. I refer to the funding of small craft workshop projects of the kind being pursued by Clwydfro in Clwyd as a cheaper and more direct way of stimulating local employment, in keeping with the character of rural areas, than advance factories necessarily are.

With regard to the Opposition's motive in calling the debate, I was puzzled to find in a recent policy document on Wales put out by the Labour party no mention of rural Wales—not a word. The rural communities of Wales have shown in the past two decades how much the Labour party cares for them by converting themselves into Conservative seats. I would not for a moment suggest that the Labour party, in calling the debate, was motivated by anything as dishonourable as the prospect of an approaching by-election in a seat with a large rural hinterland, but the party should look at the rather curious outlook of some of its political advisers. Some of these advisers are very strange indeed and very anti-agricultural. I understand that the research department of the Labour party has just produced a children's book on trade unionism which tells the story of farm animals—

Mr. John: I would not expect the hon. Gentleman to know a great deal about politics; he has had enough difficulty in keeping to his Central Office brief. The Labour research department is not a vehicle or a department of the Labour party.

Mr. Harvey: I am glad to have that reassurance. I was a little surprised to see that this document had been published by the research department, and I am glad to have it on record that it reflects in no way the sentiments of the Labour party. This children's book on trade unionism tells the story of farm animals going on strike to protest at dangerous, rusty machinery that they work with and the rotten food that they get from Mr. Moneybags, the farmer, in return for working a 12-hour day. I might enlighten the Opposition by saying that no farmer would become Mr. Moneybags if he did not use modern machinery and high yield feeding stuffs and if he did not work a 16-hour day.

The value of this debate is that it reveals the extent of the Labour party's knowledge of and attitude towards farming and rural Wales and those who work there.

6.11 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I was disappointed by one point in the Minister of State's otherwise excellent opening speech. The propaganda machine at the Welsh Office has for once neglected to make any announcement about "goodies". No doubt we shall have to wait for the winding-up speech of the Secretary of State for Wales before those "goodies" are announced.

The Minister of State asked for a positive approach to be adopted. I shall try to make a positive suggestion: it is about time that the Welsh Office became a serious Department of policy making. We are referring to rural communities in Wales. I should prefer to describe it as the countryside of Wales or, in the predominant language of that countryside, as cefn gwlad. The countryside of Wales is the responsibility of the Welsh Office in terms of policy. It is a territorial Department of State. The Welsh Office is the department for agriculture in Wales, for the environment and for the national parks, housing, social services, planning, overall economic oversight, transportation, tourism, education and training. The Development Board for Rural Wales is also answerable to the Welsh Office. Many more aspects of territorial policy are dealt with by the Welsh Office.

After a long and detailed study of all the circulars that have been produced by the Welsh Office, and after comparing them line by line and clause by clause with similar circulars produced by other Departments in London, there seems to be very little difference between them, apart from certain policy aspects relating to the Welsh language. The Welsh Office does not appear to have a distinctive policy-making function, yet it ought to have a positive strategy for dealing with the future of rural communities in Wales. The failure of the Welsh Office over adopting such a strategy has already been mentioned by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), who said that the Welsh Office ought to be the agricultural department for Wales and should represent Wales directly in the European Community. The Welsh Office did not demand, as it should have done, an additional quota for Wales which would have prevented last year's milk industry crisis from which so many farmers are still suffering. I represent a sheepmeat area, and I welcome the achievements on sheepmeat, but it is essential to put on record the failure of the Welsh Office to represent Welsh interests directly in the European Community.

[Mr. D. E. Thomas]

The Welsh Office ought to be able to make a departmental response to last year's report by the Countryside Commission relating to a better future for the uplands. In 1984 I had the opportunity to speak at the national parks conference in Llandudno. I referred in some detail to the report and its recommendations. Can the Secretary of State say what is happening inside the Whitehall machinery and Cathays Park about the report of the Countryside Commission? Is it being shelved? Is action being taken? Are the positive recommendations contained in the report being taken on board by the Government? Do the Government intend to respond fully to the report? In what way do they intend to respond to it?

The report is a serious attempt by the Countryside Commission to deal with the needs of the upland areas. The Countryside Commission's report recommends additional public investment in country areas in order to sustain upland communities, improve their quality of life, provide adequate levels of income and good employment opportunities. It also recommends the examination of ways in which economic development can be sustained. Another recommendation is that there should be an examination of ways in which capital can be invested in manufacturing and service industries, using European Community sources, where possible.

The report also considered the strengthening of the socio-economic advice of the agricultural department of the Welsh Office. It looked in particular at the need for additional housing investment in rural areas — at the need for the provision of low cost but well-designed accommodation in both the public and the private sectors to meet the needs of people living in upland areas. It also considered the need for the housing investment programmes of district councils with large rural areas to have increased allocations. That applies also to the allocations to housing associations. A series of recommendations in the report point to the need for additional public investment in rural areas. I should like to hear the full response of the Government to the most important study of the countryside that has been produced in recent years.

We have seen not the strengthening of the fabric of the countryside but its weakening by a process not only of centralisation which operates through market forces, with commercial enterprises usually situated in larger towns within rural areas, but of centralisation in the public sector — telecommunications, buses, gas and water. All of these utilities are now threatened by privatisation, or they have already been privatised by the Government. The result is centralisation. The Welsh water authority recently objected to the privatisation of its services. If that were to take place, there would no doubt be further centralisation of the water authority's services.

Local government has also been centralised, and the health districts operate in a centralised way. I have discussed recently with people in Gwynedd the health authority's proposal to remove ambulance cover from large parts of rural north-west and mid-Wales. There will be no 24-hour ambulance cover in an area stretching from Tywyn through to Corwen and nearly to Wrexham, from an area from above Llanrwst in Conwy valley at the top of my constituency right down to the Dyfi estuary. These proposals are a disaster in particular for the elderly who live in rural communities. They live in fear. They realise that if they are taken ill there will be no proper ambulance cover. It is time that the Welsh Office responded to the request from Gwynedd health authority, and ensured an adequate allocation for the ambulance service and that the £400,000 overspend by the Gwynedd ambulance service does not lead to a cut in the service.

Mr. Best: The hon. Gentleman will know that I have considerable sympathy for the view that he has just advanced about the ambulance service, but can he say whether the Welsh National party has any policies for rural Wales? If so, can he assure the House that there will be a Welsh National candidate in the Brecon and Radnor by-election, or is the Welsh National party so demoralised that it will not bother to put its policies before the electorate?

Mr. Thomas: I do not intend to use this debate, as have other hon. Members, as a means of referring to any particular by-election. All I will say is that a candidate for Brecon and Radnor will be selected on Saturday.

As for the way in which Government policies have affected the fabric of the economic life of rural communities, I ought to say that I would not have given way to the hon. Gentleman if I had thought that he would not make a serious point about the ambulance services. It will be a lesson to me that the hon. Gentleman does not make serious points. As for the effects of the Government's policies in the commerical sector, there have been a large number of bankruptcies among small firms in Wales. This is the unacceptable face of Thatcherism. The number of bankruptcies notified to the courts has risen from just over 279 to nearly 600 in 1984. Many of these businesses were operating in the Welsh countryside.

There is a tendency for us to examine rural society — many speakers have contributed to that syndrome today — in terms of problems. I have to live part of my life in inner-city London, part in inner-city Cardiff, and the better part of it in the Conwy valley and the Wnion valley in the Snowdonia national park. My experience of the rural communities is that they have massive resources. In particular, there are economic resources that do not materialise because people do not have the entrepreneurial opportunities to make them do so. Therefore, I welcome the new emphasis in the Government's economic and education policies on training initiatives.

One should also appreciate the strong cultural and social resources of these rural communities and the extent to which they are communities of participation, and take part in deciding their future. One of the most exciting developments in recent years—I know that the Minister of State is aware of this and has supported it — is the development of the community enterprise initiatives in Powys, in the Tanat valley and other areas, and particularly in the valley in Dyfed that I know best, the Teifi valley. I pay tribute to the support that the Minister of State has given to the work of Antur Teifi with help from the development board and the local authority in Dyfed. Antur Teifi and the other community co-operatives represent the way forward for many of these smaller communities in rural Wales where economic enterprise can be developed on the basis of community collaboration and control.

I stress the need for rural communities to have the resources to plan for themselves rather than to be subjected

to the structure planning of a central county council or a Welsh Office department. I pay tribute to the work of the Development Board for Rural Wales. I was fascinated to hear chapter 1—or was it chapter 6, or bits of both?—of the memoirs of the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) and I look forward to hearing more revelations from the Welsh Office in due course.

I pay tribute to the work of the board and to some of its long-serving staff. In particular, I mention Mr. Peter Garbett Edwards, who served us in mid-Wales so well, nobly and efficiently over the years. He was involved with the Mid-Wales development association, then with the Mid-Wales development corporation and now with the board. The work of the board shows the need for a sensitive approach to rural development and I am particularly pleased that the board has now increased its support for co-operatives and social programmes.

I welcome British Rail's investment on the Cambrian line. If it were not for this ill-timed debate, I should have spent today on the sprinter train going from Machynlleth up the Cambrian coastline. That would be a much more enjoyable and better way to spend my time than sitting here. We welcome this investment on the Cambrian coast, and the Barmouth bridge investment.

However, what is the point of having the highest quality of train service for our rural lines if the highest quality of bus service is not there to connect with it? Taking away from local authorities the overall co-ordinating role in transport through the Transport Bill means there is a danger that such connecting services will not continue. When the Welsh Office looks at that Bill before it concludes its passage through the other place, I hope that it will examine the need for co-ordination on an all-Wales level for passenger transport services so that we do not lose, as a result of this legislation, the co-ordination of bus and train services.

6.23 pm

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) and I have crossed swords on a number of occasions, I hope in a friendly way. I agree that it would be much more pleasent to be in rural Wales than standing here making a speech. I shall be brief because the House will want to listen to the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan).

The Opposition have done a great disservice to the people of rural Wales by tabling this motion. Once again, they have painted a picture of doom and gloom without hope—a picture that is unrepresentative of what has been happening in rural Wales. No mention has been made of the science parks of Aberystwyth and Newton or of the factory building programme of 17,500 sq ft in 1983-84, to add to the 47,867 sq ft already built in the town of Llandrindod Wells. No reference was made to the financial support for the formation of a "heart of Wales" tourist association to promote specifically the tourist facilities and attractions of that part of Wales. No mention was made of the construction of two 3,000 sq ft advance factories at Rhayader. No mention was made of the five factories at Builth Wells.

To listen to Opposition Members, one would think that nothing has been happening in rural Wales. Remarkable by its absence was any reference to the total United Kingdom economy. There was no reference to the CBI report which shows that our export order books are at a record high for 25 years, that productivity has increased and that we have the highest rate of growth in western Europe. There was no reference to the facts that United Kingdom investment rose by 15 per cent. last year and that there is a new confidence in our economy at home and abroad.

There has been a sharp drop in net investment in overseas equities, to its lowest annual figure since the abolition of exchange controls in 1979. That has been because pension funds' and life assurance companies' net purchases of overseas shares fell to £590 million last year, compared to a peak of £2,840 million in 1982. Instead of going abroad, funds went largely into domestic equities and cash. Pension funds allocated 37 per cent. of their new money to net investment in United Kingdom companies' securities, compared to 23 per cent. in 1983. That is the measure of the confidence that the market has in our economy, but one would not believe that to hear the speeches from the Opposition Benches.

Wales has become the overseas investors' El Dorado. To obtain 25 per cent. of new jobs attributable to inward investment in the United Kingdom coming to Wales is not a good record for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and not a job well done. It is a superlative record and a herculean task to ensure that so many new jobs are coming to Wales, in comparison to what is happening in the EEC.

We have a higher proportion of Japanese industry than any other comparable region in the EEC. The United States has a larger number of firms in Wales than in any other country. Second come the Germans. My hon. Friend the Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts), who has just come back from Germany, tells me that 35 factories in Wales have some German involvement, and I believe that his visit has been successful in drumming up further investment for Wales.

However, there is no room for complacency. I accept that, and one has to face the fact that a domestic economy that is doing well does not necessarily solve the problem of unemployment. That must concern us deeply in Wales.

We can stimulate more jobs in rural areas in three sectors. The first has been mentioned already. We need to promote Wales as a tourist centre far more, particularly abroad. Far too few visitors to Wales come from abroad. Secondly, we must continue the road building process. It is significant that not one Opposition Member mentioned the more than £400 million being spent on the dualling of the A55 carriageway, which will open up development prospects to north-west Wales in the same way that the M4 has opened up south Wales. There are also the bypass projects that I have been pressing for on the Isle of Anglesey.

To judge from their remarks about bus services, Opposition Members have never spoken to the private operators who are waiting in the wings ready to come in to provide the services that are so badly needed in Wales. It is not all gloom and doom in Wales—there is success. The people of Wales acknowledge that, even if the Opposition do not.

6.29 pm

Mr. James Callaghan (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) referred to the beauties of his constituency and also to the inner resources that his constituents need. They certainly have them. Every rural community possesses

[Mr. James Callaghan]

resources perhaps to an even greater extent than urban areas and, my word, the rural communities need them at present. The strength is there. As to the beauties of his constituency, I was reminded of what Ruskin, or Carlyle, said, that there is only one thing more beautiful than the drive from Dolgellau to Barmouth, and that is the drive from Barmouth to Dolgellau. If we are going for the tourism that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) mentioned, we can do no better than inscribe that on our shields.

I wish to put one point to the Government. The Minister of State is such a delightful man that it is difficult to quarrel with him. Nevertheless, underneath that confident exterior today, in the almost brazen speech that he made, there must have lurked some elements of doubt. The market economy to which the Government are devoted applies in many areas, but it does not apply in the rural areas, least of all in agriculture. Therefore, there are residual responsibilities upon the Government. It is not sufficient for the Government to tell the rural communities that they have their inner strength in the great self-reliance upon which they have depended for many years. The Government have a responsibility to offer the rural communities, and especially the agricultural community, some advice and guidance. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) said, in a powerful speech, the rural communities, and the agricultural community in particular, are very uncertain about their future.

What guidance, if any, do the Government offer? They have a responsibility to offer that guidance precisely because the market economy does not operate in that field, precisely because the price for cereals is fixed, the price for milk is fixed, the price for beef is roughly fixed and the price for sheep is fixed. What do the Government advise the hill farmers and the small farmers of Wales to do when they themselves are partially responsible for fixing prices through the common agricultural policy?

We know that the income of the small farmer has been reduced as a result of the milk quota. What do the Government advise those who grow cereals to do? My right hon. and learned Friend said correctly that we in Wales are not as much affected by the cereals situation as the people in East Anglia are. Nevertheless, there is a growth of cereals in Wales. What is the advice? Should farmers grow more cereals? But the Government want us to grow fewer cereals. Do the Government believe that we should go over to quotas, or will they rely upon a price reduction? If the Government are in favour of going over to quotas, no farmers in Wales will grow fewer cereals, because, when the quota comes in, the farmers will find, as the dairy people found, that their quotas will be adversely affected because they have tried to diversify into beans or something else. What then is the Government's advice on that?

What do the Government advise those people in rural communities to do whose incomes have been reduced? Is the advice to substitute cereals for milk? Surely not. Is the advice to go for beef or for sheep, and then to find a market such as the present one, with over-production of cereals and of milk? If fewer cereals are to be grown and the milk quota is to be reduced, what are people supposed to do? Are they supposed to take the reduction in income and go into the bed and breakfast business, or try to get into some other field—and, if so, what?

The Government have some responsibility for this situation. If the market economy prevailed, then I would agree — let the weakest go to the wall, let the communities be wound up or rely on whatever it is they can find to do—but that is not the situation.

The Government say that they want to preserve the rural communities and to strengthen them, so what advice do they offer the small farmer whose milk quota has been reduced so that his income is smaller and who certainly ought not to be encouraged to go over to cereals, in view of the ensuing surplus? Is he supposed to accept the reduction in income? If not, what alternatives do the Government propose to preserve, to safeguard and to strengthen those rural communities?

6.34 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The House will await with interest the reply of the Secretary of State for Wales to the potent questions of my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), the former Prime Minister.

The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) used the word herculean. He made a spirited defence of the policies of his right hon. Friend in recent years, but I should like to point out to him the herculean task that he and his right hon. Friend have with regard to unemployment in the largely rural county of Gwynedd. It amounts to 14,103, and male unemployment tops 21·5 per cent. I know that the hon. Gentleman will be listening hard to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for signs of change of policy and new job projects.

The Minister had a good story to tell on sheepmeat particularly, but I think that he greatly understated the agony of the small dairy farmers in Clwyd and in Dyfed. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) strongly emphasised the impact of Government policies on some of the more vulnerable aspects of agriculture in Wales.

I remind the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), who attacked my party, that it was the Labour Government under the premiership of my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth which legislated into existence the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Welsh Development Agency. Without these statutory bodies, Wales today would be an industrial desert and rural Wales would be without hope economically and socially. The Labour party, under my right hon. Friend's leadership, showed its imaginative interventionist care for rural Wales when it created the DBRW and the Welsh Development Agency. Unrestrained market forces would destroy the Welsh economy and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth implied, would annihilate rural Wales.

There are towns in rural Wales well distanced from the remaining industrial activity in Wales which have grave economic problems. I mention Pwllheli, Lampeter, Cardigan, Bangor and Caernarfon. They are united by the experience of suffering more than 22 per cent. male unemployment. Therefore, I believe that the Minister in his speech was complacent with regard to unemployment in the Principality and in the rural areas.

The Government have not told us today of the Mid-Wales Development Board's apprehension at the designation of the west midlands as an assisted area or the Telford new town enterprise zone. In today's cut-throat competitive world, rural Wales may be paying a high price for the right hon. Gentleman's failure in 1982 to keep mid-Wales as an assisted area. Nor did the Minister tell us how Dyfed and Gwynedd rural counties will fare economically after the hammer blows of the BP Oil Ltd. and Courtaulds closure plans. New jobs are unlikely to pass westwards to Dyfed and Gwynedd when west Glamorgan and Clwyd are desperately trying to shore up their industrial economies.

The Minister of State did not explain why he has allowed the European Commission to exclude Powys from eligibility for social fund aid. Powys sees this as a gratuitous kick in the teeth, given that other counties of Wales, and the neighbouring counties of Hereford and Worcester, are eligible. Powys, I know, wants, with social fund aid, to bestow high-class modern skills training upon its younger citizens.

I listened with sadness to the Minister of State pronouncing what was in effect the death sentence for the skillcentres at Llanelli and west Gwent. It appears to me that the rural county of Dyfed will be deeply disappointed, as will west Gwent, on hearing the news that the Minister released today.

Right hon. and hon. Members have mentioned education. I do not think that any hon. Member would deny that the rural counties of Wales have distinguished themselves in the provision of high quality classroom education for many generations. But today there is an atmosphere of crisis—the administrators, teachers and parents are all exhibiting deep concern. Her Majesty's inspectorate report says that there is

"a slow but persistent decline in the quality of the learning environment . . . a substantial backlog of work has built up for repairs . . . pupils learning experiences are impoverished as the replacement of worn and outdated stock is being postponed . . . the drab appearance of many buildings does little to enhance the learning of pupils in schools where pressure on resources has already led to some impoverishment of experience."

Local education authorities in rural Wales are concerned. They have exhibited the most careful housekeeping in their budgets. Everyone in the education service in Wales knows that the widespread reductions in staffing are having an undesirable impact on the curriculum. Powys is a sad example—34 teaching posts are to be axed; the school meals service is under immense pressure; and it is proposed to raise the age of entry to nursery schools. In Powys as many as eight village schools are earmarked for closure in that very rural county. The system of targets and penalties is deeply injurious to the prospects of the most vulnerable of our pupils in the state sector in rural Wales.

Hon. Members have referred to the Transport Bill. It was a reflection of the deep concern felt throughout Wales. The Conservative proposals will crucify non-car owners in rural areas; their mobility will be drastically restricted. Bus users in outlying areas could be cut off if the Bill is enacted, not only from their employment and their social life, but from their recreational facilities.

Rural bus users could find that regular timetabled services disappear. Hon. Members are concerned about the potential decline in the safe maintenance of buses. The employees of the National Bus Company tell me that they are worried about their pension prospects and deeply concerned about potential redundancies. The Bill threatens to injure the quality of life in the more far-flung settlements of rural Wales. It can be summed up as a charter for less service and more costs.

I know that the Mid-Wales Development Board and the Welsh Women's Institute will have nothing to do with the Bill. They believe that it is a disaster. They have been highly critical of it from the start and have not lessened their criticisms as the Bill has progressed.

The Cabinet can best help rural Wales by a strategic change in economic policy. Specifically the Mid-Wales Development Board is entitled to a vote of confidence, it needs new, enhanced powers and it should be enabled to build even more advanced factories and science parks. It should have a guaranteed enlarged budget for several years ahead.

It is clear that the road links between south and north Wales must be considerably improved, and specifically the A483 and the A470 should be tackled. In the Mid-Wales heartland the A44 between Rhayader and Leominster must be upgraded as soon as possible.

I hope that, even at this late stage, the Secretary of State will fight to give eligibility to Powys in the EEC social fund. The Government should redouble their efforts for a larger social fund in the Community. Mid-Wales is desperately vulnerable because it is not an assisted area. Moreover, rural Wales will be vulnerable for as long as that territory lacks a strong regional policy. The right hon. Gentleman has presided over a weakening of regional policy in Wales. A strong regional policy would help us to hold on to some of our school leavers. My fear is that we shall lose able youngsters to Telford and the west midlands.

Local authorities could help the right hon. Gentleman create more work. What is needed for them to be effective is a freeing of the county and district authorities from the yolk of targets and penalties. To be without a job is a desperately demoralising experience. To be unemployed in our rural villages and towns is to know the true meaning of loneliness and isolation. Unemployment is gradually becoming a frightening reality in our country communities.

Government cuts in the public sector have vastly decreased job vacancies in the largest employers in rural areas—the local councils, the hospitals and the schools. The jobless move away permanently and the tightly knit family communities that comprise the heartland of Britain and Wales are torn apart. We believe that the quality of life must be improved for those living in our scattered rural counties. The Conservatives have cut the lifeline to our rural areas, and the way of living preserved for generations has suddenly come under threat. The Government are guilty of adopting a complacent attitude towards rural Wales.

6.47 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): In his concluding remarks, the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) referred to a system of targets and GREs in local government finance. It is because we very much appreciate the problems of rural areas, especially those in Wales, that the targets and GREs for Powys and Gwynedd are the highest of any local authority in England and Wales. It is just one sign of the importance and priority that we attach to the particular problems that they face.

[Mr. Nicholas Edwards]

The motion and the Opposition's speeches accuse the Government of complacency, but have singularly failed to put forward positive proposals—as my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Harvey) pointed out in a devastating speech.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) spoke somewhat curiously about shaping the structure of society. He deplored the historic depopulation that has gone on for a century and a half. He seemed to be unaware that during the past decade the population in mid and rural Wales has been rising strongly. He was wrong to give the impression that it is simply a matter of old people retiring to the beauties of rural Wales. The fact is that over the same period the working age groups have grown in every county in Wales. That is hardly a sign of an area in a desperate state of decline.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd called for imaginative proposals. He did not put them forward himself, but he and the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) warned about the difficulties facing agriculture and the need to cut the surpluses of and expenditure on the system of agricultural support in Europe. I agree with a great deal of what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said about future consumption trends that may affect agriculture. They both called for a White Paper.

It was perhaps the speech of the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), that showed not only the need for guidance but the need for taking time and for consultation before giving such guidance. In his very short contribution he spelled out a great many of the difficulties that confront us and agriculture. Whilst I agree with him about the need to map a way through these uncertainties, nothing would be more disastrous for agriculture than to draw that map without properly ascertaining the way forward. I and my Department have been spending much time in recent weeks and months talking to those in the industry and those concerned with it, and discussing these matters with everyone with expert knowledge.

I regard it as one of the highest priorities for my Department to devote much attention to what I regard as a central issue — the need to devise systems of agricultural support that support the rural areas and do not contain within them the seeds of their own destruction, as so many of our systems of support have in the past. I am consulting on these issues with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture and with those who have responsibility for agriculture. I hope that we shall be able to come forward with some guidance. I would have wished that we might have from the Opposition a positive injection in the debate on these important matters.

The Liberal party's amendment represented a direct and outright by-election bid—"Vote for us, and we promise you a jolly ride on the gravy train." The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) was careful not to say who would pay. He said that he was against agricultural rating but, as I pointed out in an intervention, his friends in the SDP have made it clear that they believe that it is the farmers who should pay for all these goodies through the rating of farms and agricultural land. No doubt these contributions will be charmingly and politely explained to the electorate of Brecon and Radnor by the candidate who fought me in 1979 and who achieved the lowest vote for the Liberal party in my constituency for over 100 years.

The entry of young people into agriculture was referred to by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North. He will know that the Northfield committee came out against the introduction of grants or subsidised loans for young farmers. We have made it easier for young farmers to enter the industry via smallholdings and by security of tenure changes for agricultural holdings. These will help to make holdings available for letting, encouraging smallholding tenants to move on. The Agricultural Holdings Act 1984 also introduced compulsory retirement at 65 for smallholding tenants, as recommended by the Northfield committee. We are currently revising the capital grants scheme. One proposal under consideration is the best way to help young entrants.

Nowhere was the extraordinary paucity of ideas from the Opposition more strikingly illustrated than in what they had to say about transport. We were reminded by my hon. Friend the Minister of State how in 1977 the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) presided over a conference in Aberystwyth at which he said:

"We have all watched with growing concern, particularly in recent years, a steady decline in rural transport services".

Later he said:

"We still have to face the fact, however, that there are many areas in which conventional services would be an expensive luxury. It is not good economic sense to run ordinary buses on routes when passenger loadings are in twos and threes; and where the terrain makes such operations physically difficult anyway."

Of course, the Labour party did nothing about that, and the decline that he described has gone on since. It is illustrated in the Mid-Glamorgan public transport plan and by the announcement that there may have to be a closure of the National Bus Company facilities in my constituency. The Opposition have failed to face up to the fact that the decline has been going on and that it is this Government who are bringing forward proposals to give the opportunity for new services to be introduced.

During the debate there has been a good deal of emphasis on the need for improved access to the rural areas of Wales. Certainly this Government have carried out a massive improvement of the road imfrastructure in Wales. When I look back at the threats that hung over the railway lines of Wales when we came into office, it is extraordinary to consider the posititon as it is today. My hon. Friend the Member for Clywyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) spoke of wild rumours about closing railway lines. Of course, they are wild and wholly false. The reality is established by what has been happening to the central Wales, the mid-Wales and the Cambrian coast lines. A sustained effort involving local authorities, Mid-Wales Development, the Wales tourist board, the Welsh Office and British Rail, involving more than £5 million of investment by British Rail, has given those railway lines a security that they have not had for many years.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon asked about the relative support for the national tourist boards in England, Scotland and Wales. When I got the information it came as a pleasant surprise because I had not realised how relatively well we were doing in Wales. We have total expenditure by the Wales tourist board in grant in-aid and projects in 1985-86 of over £7 million. In relation to our population that compares very well with the expenditure by the Scottish tourist board of £8·8 million and of the expenditure by the English tourist board of £16·7 million.

The improvement in the level of expenditure by Wales tourist board over the last few years also compares favourably with expenditure in the other countries.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conway (Mr. Thomas) asked about the Government's response to the Countryside Commission's report on the uplands. I know the hon. Member takes a great interest in these matters. No doubt it was because he has so much research going on that he overlooked the fact that the Government printed their response on 31 January. If he looks for it, I am sure he will find it and be able to read it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West referred to the importance of rural post offices. I must emphasise that the closures that are taking place are of urban post offices that are within about a mile of other post offices. The position is different in rural areas and the Post Office has given assurances that the rural network will be maintained.

My hon. Friend also asked about consideration given to proposals made by education authorities to close rural schools. In considering the balance of educational advantage we are concerned about the ability of the school to deliver a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, but we also take account of distance and travelling time. I made it clear that I sympathise with those who believe that village schools have an important contribution to make to the community, although that has to be balanced against the need to devote adequate resources to the education of children generally and to provide the quality that we need. We have launched the new initiatives that my hon. Friend the Minister of State mentioned because we attach importance to those matters.

The hon. Members for Alyn and Deeside and for Meriionnydd Nant Conwy mentioned the recent action taken by the European Commission to exclude Powys from access to the social fund. We have already made strong representations to the Commission, and the Government are now taking the matter up at ministerial level. It is a mistaken and misguided action with which we disagree.

It is absurd to accuse the Government of complacency over the problems facing farming. Milk producers face a difficult period of adjustment. No one who represents Pembrokeshire could have any doubt about that, but the Opposition should be honest. They have been calling for savings in the common agricultural policy and they have been criticising surpluses, but it is idle to pretend that change can be achieved without discomfort and hardship. The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) voted against the legislation that established the outgoers scheme which is now the lifeline for more than half the Welsh milk producers.

The vigorous fight that the Government have put up to ensure the future of the beef premium scheme and the sheepmeat regime has been mentioned. I remind the House that it was this Government who introduced the sheepmeat regime in October 1980. It has been the bedrock upon which the industry's prosperity has been established. It was this Government who extended the less-favoured areas and gave an additional 400,000 hectares of coverage within Wales so that 80 per cent. of the agricultural area of Wales is now covered. Hill livestock compensatory allowances are expected to be claimed by 15,000 farmers —a 50 per cent. increase—and enhanced rates of grant are now available to about 9,000 extra farmers.

It was ironic to hear the remarks made by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside about employment in a week during which Laura Ashley has announced that it is proposing to move its headquarters accounts and personnel departments to mid-Wales, and that it is involved in a massive extension which will provide over 500 new jobs. It is also ironic at a time when Shotton Paper has given the biggest boost in modern times to employment in forestry in Wales, and when we are announcing a massive extension of training facilities in Wales.

The Government are accused of complacency by a party that lives in the past, that fails to recognise the certainty of change or its desirability, but clings tenaciously to the ideas, prejudices and myths of the past and seeks to prevent and obstruct the road to progress in every way that it can.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes, 160, Noes 267.

Division No. 225] **[7.03 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Anderson, Donald
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John

Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Parry, Robert
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Dr. Roger Thomas

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John

Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises the difficulties faced by the farming industry and by rural communities in a period of change, but welcomes the reversal of the long period of depopulation in much of rural Wales, and supports the continued efforts of the Government to improve the services provided and to develop employment opportunities in the countryside.

Higher Education

7.16 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the Government's short-sighted and defeatist policy on higher education which, because it fails to match the nation's need for a sustained supply of graduates, for increased opportunities for continuing education and for high quality research, is a recipe for national economic, industrial and social decline.

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Radice: No education paper in recent years has received such universal condemnation as the Green Paper "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s". *The Guardian* comments that it elevates

"anorexia nervosa into a public policy."

The Times Higher Education Supplement concludes:

"we knew already how negative and philistine the Government's approach to higher education had become, but to have it so wretchedly confirmed is a shocking, and chilling, experience."

It is not just the newspapers of the Liberal establishment, so despised by this Government and one or two hon. Members, that are critical; even *The Times* compares the breadth of vision shared by the University Grants Committee and the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education with the Green Paper's lack of vision. The *Financial Times* predicts that it

"will probably please nobody who is seriously interested in the matter."

The Economist criticises the Green Paper for getting student numbers wrong, for being anti-feminist, for failing to encourage practical co-operation with industry and for failing to plan for more rather than fewer students. Even the pro-Tory popular press is uncertain about how to present the Green Paper. The *Daily Express*, searching for a popular theme, talks about

"a crackdown on left-wing student bully boys"

as if the Federation of Conservative Students did not exist.

Only *The Sun*, with its customary maturity of judgment, accuracy and sureness of touch, is on the Secretary of State's side. It proclaims:

"There need be no tears over Sir Keith Joseph's proposals to reduce the number of universities . . . Some of the new centres of learning are universities in name only, with low academic standards and unchecked left-wing intolerance and hooliganism. If, for example, Essex were to crumble into the North Sea, the only disadvantage would be an increase in coastal pollution."

Those were not the Secretary of State's words, but the words of *The Sun*, which is his friend.

Of course the academic world has been hostile to the Green Paper. That is perhaps not surprising. What is surprising is the almost total absence of support even among the Government's friends. Most fair-minded observers would agree that the Secretary of State's statement to the House on 21 May when he introduced the Green Paper got an almost uniformly hostile reception. A few hon. Members may be hoping that what they perceive to be the merits of the Green Paper will win through, despite the barrage of criticism, and that is obviously what the Secretary of State hopes. But the trouble with the Green Paper is that it is not just a public relations disaster; if implemented, it would be a disaster for Britain.

By any standards, the Green Paper is a grossly inadequate state paper. It has few new ideas, and there is little, if any, attempt to justify its conclusions by argument and evidence. Above all, it lacks vision and imagination.

[Mr. Radice]

The enormity of the Green Paper's failure is highlighted by the background against which it was produced and by our national requirements. Hon. Members will remember that there was a cut in the recurrent university grant of 7 per cent. in real terms between 1980-81 and 1984-85. That cut has meant 11,000 to 12,000 well-qualified students being turned away every year, and the loss of nearly 6,000 jobs. Above all, given the scale of the cuts and their uneven distribution, it has meant a collapse of academic morale — hardly the best spur for the increased efficiency for which the Secretary of State calls.

The universities had barely recovered from 1981 when, on 9 May this year, the UGC wrote to all vice-chancellors and principals telling each institution to prepare for Government support to decline by an average of 2 per cent. in real terms over the next three years. That is equivalent to the closure of a middle-sized university such as Southampton, Exeter or Durham, each year.

Under the selective system of support for research, which the UGC favours, and which the Government support, the grant to some universities may be cut by far more than 2 per cent. The UGC says that universities which suffer less than the average can do so only at the expense of other universities. Therefore, at a time when student numbers are at their peak, the universities have been told to make do with less and less money.

It is true—the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has reminded me of this a few times, although I did not need reminding of it — that, so far, polytechnics and other institutions of higher education have taken many of the students who would formerly have obtained university places. All credit to them for doing so without receiving adequate additional income. Indeed, the National Advisory Body says that there was a 20 per cent. real cut in expenditure per pupil between 1980-81 and 1984-85. It has warned the Secretary of State that taking on extra students without sufficient extra resources puts a heavy burden on staff and is a threat to the maintenance of quality. Despite the Prime Minister's commitment at the general election to maintaining level funding for universities, and despite the Green Paper's pious words about providing sufficient resources for higher education in the current planning period, cuts have been made and are still being made, and more are planned for the future.

The position could and should be different. If we are to survive and prosper as a nation, we need a sustained supply of highly skilled, highly motivated and highly adaptable graduates, capable of responding to the pace of change and of participating effectively in our democratic society. We need a sustained supply of high-quality research, not only to satisfy the needs of industry, but to advance learning. There is little reference to learning in the Green Paper. Above all, if we are to survive as a nation, we need a dynamic, vigorous and innovative system of higher education.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that 66,000 more people are in higher education now than in 1979? Is he saying that the quality of their studies is now inferior? Can he confirm whether a future Labour Government would restore any cuts?

Mr. Radice: I said that the National Advisory Body has advised the Secretary of State that if the unit of resource in polytechnics and other institutions of higher education is not maintained, quality will be threatened.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): But it is not under threat at the moment?

Mr. Radice: I simply quoted the NAB, which advises the Secretary of State. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has read that advice, but if he did, he would discover that that is the case.

The Labour party believes that the Government are wrong to cut resources as they have. The NAB and the UGC should have the security of funding—the truly level funding—for which they ask and should not have to make cuts, as the Secretary of State is asking them to do. In 1990, there will be no case for cutting resources to higher education in the way that the Green Paper suggests.

If the Secretary of State will not accept that description of our national requirements from me, he should at least heed his advisers, which are the UGC and the NAB, whose chairman is the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science. I am sad that he is not present this evening. Hon. Members will remember the advice given last year to the Secretary of State in the eloquent joint statement from the UGC and the NAB. They called for measures to broaden access, including introducing the new principle of ability to benefit. They called for a new emphasis on continuing education, which they saw as essential economically and socially. They called for a sustained research effort, and warned that

"to curtail research would in the long run impoverish the nation materially as well as culturally."

They rejected the Department's forecast of student numbers after 1990 as under-estimating the participation rate of women, the numbers of mature students, and the impact of the changing social composition of the population. The UGC asked for truly level funding and NAB wanted extra resources, to cope with additional student demand among other things. What is the Green Paper's response to those vital issues? On most of them, the Government have ignored their advice or stated a contrary or modified view without arguing out the case.

On ability to benefit, the Government accept the principles but then qualify them so heavily as to make their acceptance virtually meaningless. The chapter on continuing education is so cursory as to amount to a deliberate snub. Clearly, the Prime Minister's blue pencil has been at work.

Mr. Greenway: No.

Mr. Radice: Well, it is three and a half pages long. That is not good enough for a Green Paper on what the NAB and the UGC said was a most important addition to the Robbins principles.

The Government say that their aim is that the contribution of higher education to the nation's research effort should continue on about the present scale. That is a misleading statement because the Government are well aware that the amount of public money going to university research will decline over the next three years. Indeed, they propose that some departments and universities could lose their research function altogether. The Government say that they hope that industry will fill the gap. If so, how and by how much? We need concrete answers, not pious hopes.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Of course research has been cut, and quite rightly. Some of it has not been justified in terms of national need. The hon. Gentleman asked how we can be sure that industry will fill the gap. Industry will fill the gap if the research that it wants is followed up in universities that research is in the interests of industry and hence the nation.

Mr. Radice: The problem with that theory is that industry wants short-term gains.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Be fair.

Mr. Radice: The problem with research is that pure research sometimes takes 20 years to become effective in the form of applied research. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, who is knowledgable about industry and many other matters, is not aware of that obvious point.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Radice: I hope that the hon. Lady will forgive me if I do not—many hon. Members want to speak and this is a short debate.

On student numbers, the Green Paper accepts variant Y which, predictably, is the lowest Department of Education and Science estimate of student numbers in the 1990s, without even bothering to argue the case. The Government's response is discourteous and intellectually disreputable.

On resources, the Government cannot decide whether their justification for the cuts that they want to make is that the economy has been so unsuccessful that the country cannot afford its present higher education system and that the Government's economic policy has been so unsuccessful that we cannot afford it, or that student numbers are falling. The problem with the latter argument is that student numbers, as even the Green Paper admits, will be at a record level until 1990. The argument until 1990 must be in terms of insufficient resources. After that date, argument is about rationalisation or, to use the Under-Secretary of State's unhappy phrase, "rolling the wicket for rationalisation". I should have thought that it is much more like "digging up the wicket for destruction".

A muddle runs throughout the Green Paper. The Government wants higher education to contribute more effectively to the national economy but appears to believe that an impoverished and contracting higher education system will serve our economic needs best. That is nonsense.

Despite the lip service paid in the Green Paper to the importance of arts subjects for their own sake and that of industry and commerce, the shift to science and engineering will take place — contrary to the UGC's advice and what the House of Lords Select Committee said —at the expense of the arts. That also is nonsense.

Despite the Jarratt report's recommendation about long-term planning and long-term planning horizons, and despite the experience of 1981, the Green Paper appears to believe that a higher education can become more efficient against a background of contraction and closure. That again is nonsense. The Government want to cut resources to higher education not because there are rational arguments for doing so but because the Cabinet wants to cut public spending. That is the reality behind the Green Paper.

The Green Paper is a muddle and its arguments are weak — when they are stated at all — because the Government's higher education policy is not shaped by educational considerations, demography or sound economics but because they believe in cutting public spending. The consequences of this ideological fixation are likely to be appalling — loss of opportunities for young people, the closure of whole departments or even institutions, loss of jobs, redundancies, institutions' research functions being downgraded or abolished, little expansion in continuing education and the collapse of morale throughout higher education.

As our motion says, the Green Paper

"is a recipe for national economic, industrial and social decline."

The Labour party rejects the Government's barbaric, Philistine and defeatist approach. We accept the advice of the UGC and the NAB—the Government's advisers—about access, continuing education, student numbers and resources.

Mr. Dickens: But will Labour restore the money?

Mr. Radice: Yes. We have said that we support what the UGC and NAB are asking for in their advice to the Government. Higher education will have, however, to adapt to changing needs. We offer higher education a future that serves the nation's needs and we shall campaign throughout the country for our positive alternative and against the Government's Green Paper.

7.38 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its policies for ensuring that higher education is better managed and more attuned to the needs of the economy, for maintaining and enhancing standards, and for broadening the criteria for access to higher education; urges Her Majesty's Government to continue to seek ways of making more effective use of the resources available for higher education; and welcomes the framework for the future development of higher education set out in Cmnd. 9524.".

Higher education should not be debated in the terms which the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) has chosen to use. Higher education is to be judged by quality. It can be judged properly only by quality, excellence, fitness for purpose, scholarship, research—basic and otherwise—[HON. MEMBERS: "Access?"]—learning, cultivation of the intellect—[HON. MEMBERS: "And access."]—and maturity. Access must take all of those factors into account. Access for the sake of access is of no service to those who are given access or to the country.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): That is elitism.

Sir Keith Joseph: If it be elitist, I am one who wishes to see thoroughly well trained surgeons, thoroughly well trained engineers and thoroughly developed intellects among those who take decisions on our citizens.

I do not suggest that all those qualities can be secured only by those who have higher education. However, we can judge the higher education available by the possession of those qualities. I do not believe that many people in higher education would disagree with that.

The Government frame their approach by those criteria. It was by those criteria that I spoke to the British Academy a couple of years ago. I hoped that the Green Paper would be discussed on the basis of those criteria both outside and

[Sir Keith Joseph]

inside the House. I say this diffidently, but I hoped that my own fairly well-known preoccupation with quality would have earned that much.

In recent decades, under Governments of both parties, the country has gone through a period of relative economic failure. Judging by what we hoped to achieve and by what has been achieved by some of our neighbours in north-west Europe, we have had less prosperity and therefore less well-endowed public and social services.

It is open to all to apportion blame as they wish between Governments of all parties or between managements and trade unions, but relative economic failure is a fact.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn) *rose*——

Sir Keith Joseph: I am sorry, but I want to make as brief a speech as possible because many hon. Members want to take part in the debate.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Sir Keith Joseph: Very well, I shall give way once.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State seeks to apportion blame——

Sir Keith Joseph: I was about to deal with that.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State cannot know the question that I wish to put to him unless he is clairvoyant. He seeks to apportion blame for our current economic difficulties, which have become worse in the last six years. Does he recall that in speeches such as that at Preston in September 1974 he persuaded the Conservative party to follow its monetarist policy with the conviction that that policy would generate employment, prosperity and wealth? What has gone wrong?

Sir Keith Joseph: At Preston I spoke of the need to restrain public spending if we were to abate inflation. The forecasts have come true, to that extent.

The hon. Gentleman interrupted an analysis on which I had embarked. We have been through decades of relative economic failure. I am certainly not putting the blame on higher education, but there is no evidence from the last decades that rapid expansion of higher education in itself secures economic success. Of course it does not. Much more is involved in economic success.

Some outside the House have quoted, against what they see as the Green Paper's approach, the vision of the great Cardinal Newman 130 years ago. His was a vision which we can still universally admire and to which I adhere. However, I ask the House to remember that Newman spoke at a time when such universities as there were—they were few and there were no equivalents to polytechnics — were not tax-financed. They were financed privately and to some extent by local authorities.

Because we have not done as well as we would have wished economically over the past 40 years, and because higher education is now largely tax-financed, it is valid to say—as the Green Paper says—that we must spend public money sensibly and that part of higher education should make its contribution to the success of the economy. I emphasise that I am referring only to some aspects of higher education being involved in that contribution.

The Green Paper does not suggest that higher education is merely an instrument for improving economic performance. I should never suggest that, nor would the Government. The Green Paper takes for granted the purpose of higher education of which I spoke earlier. In my British Academy lecture I explicitly recognised that among the chief purposes of higher education is the pursuit of learning as something to be valued in its own right, the general cultivation of the intellect and the "refinement of the ideas of the age."
That is the essence of Newman's ideas.

Those purposes are not, nor should they be, directly concerned with economic benefit. Indeed, some teachers and scholars in many fields have traditionally and properly distanced themselves from such concerns to achieve a greater degree of profundity, accuracy and dispassionate understanding. That capacity for dispassion is one of the glories of higher education which I cherish and wish to see preserved.

The pursuit of learning for its own sake and the general cultivation of the intellect are not incompatible with greater enterprise or with a contribution to economic success. On the contrary, only to the extent that we are economically successful can we continue to find the resources to support pure learning, reflection and the refinement of ideas.

We must also remember that, although some treasured parts of higher education are concerned with learning for its own sake, much of higher education is not of that character. Much of what is taught in departments of engineering, science, law and medicine, for example, is directly economically relevant and involves the pursuit of knowledge and understanding at the highest levels.

When the Green Paper asks academics to pay due attention to enterprise and economic success, it does not argue in favour of a philistine disregard for scholarship. It asks for recognition that the refinement of the intellect and a contribution to economic success are not incompatible but are mutually dependent and that the pure pursuit of understanding and the acquisition of directly economically relevant skills are equally valid aspects of higher education. Neither is to be despised. The Government know that, and so should their critics.

It is because the Government so well understand that higher education's function is the pursuit and expansion of learning through scholarship and research, the transmission of values, knowledge and skills and the cultivation of the intellect and of maturity that we set such store by rigour, excellence and fitness for purpose. That is why the Government so strongly welcome the appointment by the committee of vice-chancellors and principals of a committee under the vice-chancellor of Lancaster university to examine universities' internal validation procedures. That is why the Government set up the Lindop committee.

We need the pursuit of learning, the cultivation of the intellect and vocational education. There is nothing new about vocational education in the history of the universities.

We rightly spend large sums of public money on higher education. We believe it to be our duty, without being dirigiste or going in for manpower planning, to try to predict the broad trends that higher education should consider serving. Now that the Jarratt committee has reported, it is plain for us all to see that a combination of the review of the UGC, recommended by that committee and accepted by the Government, and the encouragement of universities to organise their decision-making process

so that they can make judgments across the whole of their area will make them perhaps more capable and willing to make the predictions about broad trends that the Government have ventured to make in the Green Paper. It is because we believe that in this highly competitive world more jobs will depend to a greater extent on science and engineering skills, and more jobs, relying as they do upon consumers, will depend not only upon technical but upon management and enterprise skills in those subjects — I say that without denigrating the skills of management and enterprise in non-scientific and non-engineering departments — that we have on several occasions openly suggested a switch in the proportion of places——

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Keith Joseph: No, because I am anxious to finish my speech.

Mr. Madden *rose——*

Sir Keith Joseph: I am sorry. I shall ask for the leave of the House to reply to the debate, when I shall deal with hon. Members' questions.

Several times we have suggested a switch, as the House knows. There is an increasingly pervasive indispensability, for economic success, of science and engineering in entrepreneurship, management and technical skills. Unless we prosper economically, whatever the hon. Member for Durham, North hopes one day to be able to do, we shall not be able to afford to support learning, scholarship and research to the extent that we all want.

We are not the only country making that judgment. Yesterday I was in Luxembourg, where all the members of the Economic Community talked of making the same switch. I hope that the House will remember that we face a fall in the age cohort in the 1990s of no less than 33 per cent. The hon. Member for Durham, North carefully avoided giving figures for that fall. That fall is not a prediction because it follows ineluctably from the births that have already occurred, and it is against that fall that the Government are proposing in the Green Paper, and not in final form, a 14 per cent. reduction in the number of places. I hope that the House will remember also that this Government and their predecessor have made possible an expansion of no fewer than 60,000 places in higher education as a whole during the past six years, a rise of no less than 15 per cent. Therefore, we now have a record proportion of a record age vintage in higher education.

The proposals in the Green Paper are such that that record proportion of the age vintage will be exceeded. After the fall in the age cohort and in the number of places, and if the Green Paper's proposals are validated by Government decisions to be made later, there will be a rise from 13·5 per cent. of the age vintage now in higher education to 15·5 per cent.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): What about the Prime Minister's target of 22 per cent. in 1972?

Mr. Dickens: Listen and learn.

Sir Keith Joseph: Moreover, we are proposing to accept the UGC and NAB proposals to widen the Robbins eligibility. It is true that we have emphasised the importance of the fact that institutions of higher education should take into account motivation and maturity when admitting students, but surely that would be agreed in all parts of the House as being sensible. We have not only widened eligibility, but provided for places that will increase the age participation index, we are encouraging continuing education and expecting more women to go to higher education, and we are making provision for more mature people to do so.

If the Government's hopes, articulated in the speech that I made at Sheffield nearly two years ago, for more successful school education come true, and if the trends of eligible applicants for higher education prove that we are not being optimistic enough, we have declared our intention to review those trends and reconsider the provision that we are making.

The hon. Member for Durham, North skirted three main facts. He skirted the fact that Labour, in office, cut higher education spending by 8 per cent. in one year. He skirted the fact that this Government and their predecessor have increased the number of higher education places by 15 per cent. He never once laid emphasis on quality, which, in our view, is the key essential of higher education. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will reject the motion and will support the amendment.

7.57 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I should like to begin by commending the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) on selecting this subject. I commend him the more because had he not done so, on our Supply Day on Thursday we should have selected the same subject.

One complaint about the Green Paper involves the astonishing and archaic procedure that we still pursue in the House. The Green Paper, which was promised many years ago came to us at 3.15 one afternoon, was then the subject of questions to the Secretary of State at 3.30, by which time no one had a proper chance of reading it or realising its implications.

I think that it is right to say that after one looks at the Labour motion, with which we basically agree, even if we would not pursue the inelegance of its language, one cannot help being appalled by the humbug of the Tory response. There are no proposals. There is nothing to make higher education more effective. Let me remind the House of what I said when I first read it. The first major weakness is

"to believe that anything worth preserving can be measured and that anything not susceptible to quantification is thus expendable. The second is to accept that the demographic decline condemns us to a decline in the supply of graduates."

I believe that there is a particular flaw in the Green Paper, exemplified in the Secretary of State's motion, when he says:

"higher education is better managed and more attuned to the needs of the economy".

There is a considerable paradox in that the right hon. Gentleman recognises the need for skilled manpower, but does not acknowledge the implications for higher education. The Green Paper states:

"unless the country's economic performance improves, we shall be even less able than now to afford many of the things that we value most".

Surely that is the reverse of the truth. Unless we invest, our economic performance will not improve.

Annexe B gives figures for the social rate of return on investing in a place of higher education as between 5 per cent. and 7 per cent. Such a return is similar to that which one gets on Government stock. Therefore, it is presumably

[Mr. Clement Freud]

respectable investment in the eyes of the Government, considerably better than the average investment in nationalised industry, very much better as well as a substantially better gamble than De Lorean or Lear Fan. One would expect such an analysis to result in positive action—but all there is is a £43 million investment in "the switch", to create 4,000 reluctant engineers—if we can find them, and *The Guardian* is highly doubtful about whether we shall be able to do so.

Rather than using the opportunity of the falling 18-year-old population to promote non-traditionals and continuing education, this is being used as an excuse for contraction and cost cutting. Look where one will in the Green Paper, one does not find what one is looking for.

We would have liked something done about the 21-hour rule—that legislation for despair and wasted opportunity. People who study when they are unemployed, one would have supposed, are most dear to the Prime Minister in that they have got on their bikes, yet nothing is being done for them, and the 21-hour rule stays.

The Open university is a most cost-effective source of academic and vocational excellence, yet in paragraph 3.12 the Green Paper contains the plumb dishonest remark:

"In the case of the Open University, the level of fees is closely related to the amount of grant made available by the Government, but the decision on the fee nevertheless rests finally with the University."

It rests finally with the university, which has no money to do anything about it or to get more students.

Many hon. Members on all sides of the House feel passionately about overseas students. They see this as a marvellous investment in mankind as well as something that we owe the former Commonwealth and Third world. *The Times Higher Education Supplement* sums it up succinctly:

"there is a section compounded of humbug and hypocrisy on overseas students which one can only hope will escape the notice of foreign critics".

As for embracing the new Robbins principle, the Green Paper states:

"courses of higher education should be available to all those who can benefit from them and who wish to do so. So long as taxpayers substantially finance higher education, however, the benefit has to be sufficient to justify the cost. The intellectual competence, motivation and maturity of the student should be consistent with the course, which must itself be of a standard appropriate to higher education."

That makes it more restrictive.

On planning, Jarratt blamed the Government for not giving universities information about their funding. Jarratt says that often the information came at the last moment, and made it impossible for the higher education sectors to plan in advance. However, this discussion document says:

"The UGC, the NAB and most recently the Jarratt report have argued that the absence of a longer funding horizon inhibits necessary planning. The Government accepts that it should give the best indications of longer term policies for higher education that it can. But planning also requires that institutions should manage their commitments and the funds available to them so as to be able to pursue their objectives effectively in circumstances of change and some inevitable uncertainty."

Therefore, it shuffles off the problem.

If pushed to find something kind to say, one would welcome the modest experiment in two-year degree courses. That ought to be looked at with care. I am also sure that the review of the UGC is welcomed everywhere. But to whom did the Department of Education and Science listen? On staffing, the UGC

"wanted at least 900 new appointments per year".

The NAB

"saw scope for tighter staffing, moving towards a staff/student ratio of 12:1".

Although we have a Green Paper, there is nothing green about it, in that it does not discuss anything. It simply holds out no hope for anyone. *The Times Higher Education Supplement* carried an article entitled "Did the Government Listen?". For anyone reading much of that excellent article, the answer was monosyllabic—they did not.

We have an X factor and a Y factor. The X factor is probably realistic, but the Y factor is simply the contention that in a changing world nothing will change in the number or composition of entrants. We would all reject the Y factor.

Instead of factors we need commitments. There should be a commitment to level funding, not least as the Government's earnest of the value of higher education. There should be a commitment to set targets for participation and to work towards them, rather than projections which never materialise and whose assumptions are dubious.

We need a commitment to use higher education to revamp the economy — as an access to national employment opportunities. If local markets collapse, higher education is the entry to the national market, and without higher education those workers would be abandoned.

I recognise that economic needs will cease to be met by traditional three-year intensive courses, so we should be planning for more and shorter courses, such as a short, sharp educational blast perhaps after five years in a job which may not be entirely suitable.

There should be a rethinking of the 21-hour rule. We should recognise the need to distinguish genuine from fraudulent claimants, but if the claimant is willing to give up a part-time course, it is likely that he will give up a full-time course.

Above all, perhaps, there should be a commitment to deploy flexibility in the skills of graduates. Instead of giving up arts students as lost sheep, let us make them all numerate and keyboard literate.

If higher education can play a positive part in making the British economy perform better, why not give more young men and women the opportunity to benefit? I and my hon. Friends will support the Labour motion, and we urge the House to do likewise.

8.7 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I must first declare an interest as I am a member of the court of Brunel university which is situated in my constituency.

The Green Paper is of great concern and importance, not only to that leading technological university but also to higher education in general. As it covers a very wide area, I shall confine my remarks mainly to its effect on the technological universities. That is the area in which I am specially, but not exclusively, interested.

I agree with the Government that it is vital for higher education to contribute more effectively to the performance of the economy. I share my right hon. Friend's view that unless the country's economic performance improves, we shall be less able to afford many of the things that we value most—as the Green Paper put it:

"including education for pleasure and general culture and the finance of scholarship and research as an end in itself".

How can this be achieved? The Green Paper stresses the importance of the initiative announced in March to increase the number of places in engineering and other shortage subjects. That amounted to £43 million over the next three years to increase the number of graduates, and postgraduates particularly, in electronic engineering, applied physics, materials science and computer science. Why has a university such as Brunel, which leads the country in these sciences, not yet been allocated one of the additional 4,000 places?

As I understand it, the intake to selected courses has reflected the value to industry and the degree of industrial commitment secured. Will my right hon. Friend tell the House a little more about how the value to industry is assessed? That leads me to ask what steps he and his colleagues can take to match the requirements of the traditional British industries, which in the past have provided a great deal of employment — the so-called heavy or metal-bashing industries — with the ability of the technological universities to produce the graduates to enable the industries to survive, expand and prosper. Surely industry must say clearly what it needs, and the universities must provide the graduates.

Why is it that in half a dozen areas of technology, which I could mention, the expertise which makes our universities world famous is now being deployed by foreign manufacturers who export their products to Britain, or the industries which should benefit from it are in decline or defunct?

Belfast university is world famous for its expertise in the small internal combustion engine, but is it being used to build Britain's motor cycles and motor car industry, or to assist foreign manufacturers who export their products to Britain?

I am told that Loughborough university is a leader for the textile industry. How much of its expertise is used to improve our textile industry? Brunel university is a leader in ship's strength and offshore construction, but why is it that Korea and Japan are the major shipbuilders, and offshore construction takes place mainly abroad? Where are the industrial scholarships to support those areas? We must concentrate on that.

I am not an expert in ships' strength, but many people at the universities with which I am familiar are. At Brunel there are fee-paying Chinese, Japanese and Turkish students who are anxious to obtain the best expertise in Britain and all that it has to offer. I wonder whether British Shipbuilders takes the same keen interest, and what the extent of its sponsorship is. It may be already satisfactory, but if we are looking for industrial sponsorship in and support of the technological universities, more must be done.

Why does Britain have to import steel? I believe that we must even import steel to build our submarines. Is our steel not of the right quality? Does British Steel put cash into the metallurgy departments of the British technological universities to ensure that it gets the graduates that it needs for the future? I hope so, because I have a high regard for British Steel and its recent achievements. Can my right hon. Friend say how the requirements of the steel industry, for example, are made known to the universities, how we get the follow-through and the funding, and how we ensure that the universities provide the sort of graduates that such an industry needs?

Paragraph 1.6 of the Green Paper discusses the importance of developing links with industry and commerce, and of industrial contracts. That is important, but the House knows that research costs about 10 times less than development. Consequently, it is important for universities to resist the temptation to go for development too soon and to remember that research is the primary consideration.

I am glad that the Green Paper refers to the well-established principle of sandwich education. My experience of seeing it in action has demonstrated that it can enable small technical universities to vie with our most famous and historic universities. If the House were to judge its success, hon. Members may well ask how it is that the last of the colleges of advanced technology vie with, for example, Cambridge. The answer is the success of the sandwich course.

I now come to the important question of future resources for higher education. A 2 per cent. cut over three years means less cash in real terms. Does that include pay settlements? Are they to be settled by the Government or, as in the past, on the basis of agreement with the unions?

If, as I assume, it is the latter, an additional £500,000 a year may have to come from the funds of the small technological universities. That worries me. In addition to the effects on graduates and academic staff it could mean fewer jobs. As the academics have tenure, it could mean fewer lab technicians and supporting staff, which is also worrying.

I also worry about the vexed question of academic tenure. I know that the Government intend to introduce legislation to limit it. Can my right hon. Friend say whether they also intend to introduce Government-funded compensation schemes for those with tenure who may decide to leave in future or who may leave as a result of the changes foreshadowed in the Green Paper?

Sir Keith Joseph: I wish to clarify that point before it becomes widely spread and misunderstood. The Government's proposal to legislate to remove tenure is for future contracts, not for those whose contracts already give them tenure.

Mr. Shersby: I understand that, and it is clear that that is the case from the Green Paper. However, I was thinking of those who already have tenure but who may suffer if they decide to leave in the future, and I was wondering whether the Government were considering a compensation scheme for them.

I now turn to the adjustment in higher education, to which paragraph 1.13 refers, and which could lead to a closing or merging of some institutions of higher education during the next 10 years. What will be the criteria for closures or mergers? Will they be based on size, on numbers or on a judgment by the Secretary of State of the day whether a particular university is contributing adequately to

"the improvement of the performance of the economy"?

One sometimes gets the impression that the Department of Education and Science and the University Grants Committee have different assumptions and make different statements. Through the Green Paper, the DES makes many statements that are good for the technological universities, but the UGC administers the resources. How then are the choices to be made? Brunel university, for example, makes money by turning out the right product in terms of its graduates, but the system throws all

[Mr. Shersby]

universities into the same pool and considers them together, although there are enormous variations in character and what they produce. Does a technological university follow the DES and what it says, or the UGC? That presents a difficulty, because the UGC is the paymaster.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): My hon. Friend keeps referring to universities in this context. I remind him that the Green Paper talks of some institutions of higher education, and does not say that some universities will have to close or merge. Will he press our right hon. Friend to make the matter absolutely clear, and ascertain whether our right hon. Friend is thinking about the future of colleges of higher education rather than the closure of universities?

Mr. Shersby: I am sure that our right hon. Friend has taken account of that point and that he will enlighten the House on it when he replies.

I trust that the question of closures or mergers is unthinkable for the technological universities that are producing good graduates and meeting the needs of industry. Will my right hon. Friend think about the example which is being set by the French, who are planning greatly to multiply the more technological universities, such as that at Compiégne, which is well known? How does one use the same yardstick, for example, for Edinburgh and for a university such as Brunel, when the two institutions are different in character but are both fine universities? Do we need a different yardstick for technological universities?

I welcome the paragraph in the Green Paper about the arts. I am glad that the Government are convinced of the importance of providing adequately for the arts. That is to be greatly welcomed. The arts contribute valuably to our society, and the events of the past week in Brussels demonstrate only too clearly how necessary and valuable it is for us to have higher education which helps to produce a decent and civilised society.

I consider this to be a thought-provoking Green Paper which, despite its shortcomings, poses many of the real questions that have to be faced in higher education in the next decade. It also contains some solid, good horse sense. The Government have to reconcile efficiency in the use of resources with improvement in the quality of higher education, while at the same time assuring the future of the universities and those who work in them. I want to see increased private funding of research and good use of public funds. I want to see dedicated members of the teaching staff receiving proper financial rewards for their work. The future of our young people is in their hands.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shersby: No, if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me. I am just coming to the end of my speech.

The teaching staff must feel that the country has confidence in them, and they have a crucial role to play in advancing the national interest. I want to see the best brains available to higher education. I believe that that can be achieved by a combination of proper rewards, based on merit, coupled with the efficient use of public funds and the encouragement and sponsorship of the private sector.

8.21 pm

Mr. Sean Hughes (Knowsley, South): The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) referred to the events in Brussels last week. Many people may consider that in the midst of our post-mortems on that disaster, and the day after the deep controversy over the Green Paper on social services, a debate on higher education is somewhat less urgent, but it is part and parcel of the same thing. It is about the sort of society that we wish to see developed, and it is also about whether we are serious in wishing to eradicate the abuses to which we can point today.

What we saw on the terraces in Brussels—admittedly in a more concentrated and brutal form—was the result of a society which is breaking down in various parts of the land. That is relevant to the debate. When whole areas of the country and whole sections of the population are written off with their potential unfulfilled, the price that we pay—and will pay in the future—is a heavy one.

References have already been made—and will no doubt be made throughout the debate—to the principle enunciated in the Robbins report. I believe that the way that the principle was translated into practice was not good enough. The fact that the recent Green Paper on higher education goes back even on that practice must not allow us to start applauding our present system of higher education as some sort of ideal, because it is far from it. The Secretary of State was forced by some of my hon. Friends to refer to access. It is apparently inappropriate in our present system for the vast majority of our people to experience higher education. The fact that that has always been so is no defence. The fact that our education system is so constructed as to produce that gross imbalance is no excuse.

Robbins outlined five goals for higher education, the fifth of which was the transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship — apparently something that the Secretary of State would support. That has never been achieved. Indeed, I would argue that today we are as far away from its realisation as we were 20 years ago.

Therefore, the first fact that we must accept is that our education system is inherently privileged, and the worst manifestation of that privilege is in higher education. In the Robbins report it was demonstrated that, of children born in 1940-41, 33 per cent. of those with parents in higher professional occupations went to university, while only 1 per cent. of those with semi-skilled or unskilled parets went to university. In the meantime, we may have changed the social categories but, according to the UCCA report in 1983, 23·5 per cent. of those with parents in the professions and 48·4 per cent. of those with parents in what were termed intermediate occupations went to university, while still only 1·1 per cent. of those whoe parents were unskilled went to university.

Where are the minority concentrated? Inevitably, they are concentrated in the most deprived areas of the country, those with the worst environment, the worst housing and the worst schools. I simply do not accept that there is some immutable law of nature which has decreed that it is inappropriate for people in areas such as my constituency to go on to higher education.

I will give the House one example of the regional variation. Less than 9 per cent. of 18 and 19-year-olds in the county of Merseyside entered university in 1983-84 compared with more than 14 per cent. in counties such as

Surrey. But even that does not tell the whole story, for within a county such as Merseyside there are gross disparities. In the more prosperous Wirral, 14·4 per cent. of the 18 and 19-year-olds entered university in 1983-84, while in devastated Knowsley only 4·4 per cent. entered university. That is the reality that the Green Paper ignores.

In a BBC radio interview, the Prime Minister described her dream of a society without class distinction. She said:

"I do not care what people's background is, where they come from. I want them to have the same opportunities."

The Government have a funny way of going about it.

It was the late Tony Crosland who said:

"the closest correlation in England so far as accent, social manners and style of life are concerned is with education. This interacting triad at the top of the social scale of education, style of life and occupational status is unquestionably a more important source of social inequality than income."

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): The hon. Gentleman is making a very interesting criticism of the education system of the past, particularly higher education, and there may be a lot of truth in what he says. But will he accept that he is therefore making the case for the Government, as we are trying to bring about change and improvement? Does he accept that the Opposition are trying to defend the status quo?

Mr. Hughes: Obviously the hon. Gentleman missed my introductory comments, when I said that I did not accept that the present position was good enough, and by implication I wanted to improve it. My argument is that the Green Paper will exacerbate the situation, far from making it better.

If Crosland was correct—I believe that he was—we have to expose the hypocrisy of those who say that we have a common culture and then deny the majority the opportunity to develop their cultural appreciation.

If the Prime Minister was serious in what she said, the Green Paper on higher education, in the form it has taken, would not have seen the light of day, because the Government have effectively declared their intention to do nothing to offset the gross imbalance of intake into higher education. Indeed, the Government are to compound the felony. Instead of the Robbins principle that a place at college or university should be available for those able to benefit from it — even though in reality that did not happen — the Government have added that the benefit has to be sufficient to justify the cost, as my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) emphasised.

As the 20th century draws to an end, after a decade of expanding educational development, the Government should now be addressing themselves to making some radical changes to benefit the community as a whole, rather than the privileged, and the proposals in the Green Paper will cut back most on those who are already most deprived. The Green Paper on higher education displays once again the short-term nature of Government policies, and it must be considered alongside the "Better Schools" White Paper and that on training for jobs. All of them are characterised by an appalling ignorance of what life is really like in the most deprived parts of this country. The Green Paper is a very timid document which fails to recognise the enormity of the problem. It exposes the Prime Minister's contemplations of a classless society as being no more than that—contemplations. Therefore, I urge Conservative Members who recognise that fact to join us in the Lobby and to support the motion.

8.30 pm

Dr. Brian Mawhinney (Peterborough): I, too, should start by declaring an interest, not only as one who was trained in our university system but as one who has spent most of his working life as an academic staff member of universities, mainly in this country. I am still a member of the board of studies of radiation biology of the university of London. This week my son started his A-levels in the hope of attending university next autumn.

I give two welcomes to the Green Paper. I welcome also the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. I welcome his reaffirmation of the commitment of our party and our Government to the importance of universities both for the pursuit of pure knowledge, scholarship and training as well as for the application of that knowledge and the excellence of those who have been trained. Perhaps it needs to be explicitly said in a debate such as this that while we debate the future of our univerity system—there are legitimate differences of view about its future — we ought not to blind ourselves to the fact that this country has one of the best university systems in the world, a fact of which we ought to be proud. It stems in large part from the contribution that academic teachers, researchers and ancillary staff have made to that system over many decades. I say that as somebody who throughout his university career was a member of the Association of University Teachers and who is now a life-long member of the association.

It is important to talk about change, and the insecurity that change brings, against a positive background. We have to recognise that most of those who work in universities are good at their jobs and are dedicated workers.

My second welcome relates not just to the relative increase in numbers which will be available in the next decade because, as my right hon. Friend has pointed out, the projected decrease in places is much less than the projected decrease of those who are deemed to be eligible. I welcome also the greater flexibility in the admissions policy of universities which is proposed. Over the years, but particularly in recent years, there has been an acceleration in the O-level and A-level standards required of university entrants, yet most of us know that there is very little, if any, correlation between a pupil's performance in O-level and A-level examinations and his subsequent performance at university. I say that as somebody who has published academic papers on this subject, based on the findings of my own medical school. Therefore, the Green Paper's commitment to greater flexibility in university entrance requirements than simply ever-increasing O-level and A-level standards is to be welcomed.

I wish to concentrate upon one aspect of university life —management and decision-making. Academic departments were established originally as a vehicle for teaching and also as a means for protecting academic standards. In a bygone era it was necessary for professors to exercise a degree of autocracy in order not just to protect their departments but to protect their subjects. Academic tenure grew up in this context. Universities are being forced to reconsider their structure. For many of them it is a difficult process. There is no precedent for it. They have not been required by change over the years to develop management and decision-making systems which are responsive to the needs of a changing world. During the last few years I have

[Dr. Brian Mawhinney]

sat on senior committees within universities which have sought to balance the budget. Our systems are somewhat archaic. Time is not on the side of universities which are unwilling to change their systems. My right hon. Friend will need to provide not financial but advisory help to universities to help them through this difficult transitional period.

My right hon. Friend knows that teaching and research tend for the most part to be centred in academic departments. That is important from a teaching point of view, not least because it safeguards the standards of the subjects being taught in those departments. However, one of the consequences is that those who are in teaching departments are expected to carry out their research within those departments. In many cases there is a fragmentation of research endeavour. This is not a good use of resources. Too many people in our universities are carrying out what is almost solitary research. If resources are limited—we all agree that they are limited, wherever the limit may be drawn — we have to ask ourselves how best we can generate useful research, using the money that is available. Because of the nature of research one cannot say that a piece of work should not be done, because it might result in something that will be useful. One has to talk about probabilities.

When considering his response to the Green Paper I hope that my right hon. Friend will ask himself whether it is still sensible for academic members of staff to be assigned to one single department which covers both teaching and research, or whether they should be assigned to one department for teaching and become a different configuration of people for the purpose of carrying out research.

In that context it is important for universities to understand better than they do now the importance of good teaching. Too much emphasis is still placed in our universities upon research papers which have already been written and published. Too many of my erstwhile colleagues—I refer not to the medical school but to the whole profession—regard students as people who get in the way of a good day's research. That attitude must change not only for the sake of the universities and students, but, as my right hon. Friend has pointed out, for the sake of the country. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State agrees with my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) who said that good decision making in universities means that they must be given as much information as possible as early as possible. I have had to practise that art in recent years. Therefore I know that it is difficult to make coherent, long-term planning decisions when one does not know what the framework will be. I am not being critical of my Government any more than I am being critical of the previous Government under which I had to operate in the same circumstances.

Finally, I welcome the review of the role of the University Grants Committee. It is overdue. There is a feeling among academics in particular that the role of the UGC has changed in recent years. It needs to be thought through again and redefined. However, I am sorry that the research councils are not to be included in that review. I say that as a person who served on the Medical Research Council for three years, while a Member of the House.

Research councils and the UGC are now inextricably bound together. The administration of the research councils is very powerful. Sometimes, questions need to be raised about the balance that is struck in them between pursuing fundamental research that is of itself important and research into problems that are of national concern but that are not always treated with the respect that they deserve within the councils.

Change is seldom a comfortable or pleasant experience. If we are to have change — my right hon. Friend is right to say that we must have it—it needs to be carried out with support not only from the Government but from the House for the university structure and for the teaching staff who are being required to change within it.

Change there needs to be, not least in the universities' ability to be more flexible in the changing world in which they operate and for which they are training their undergraduates. The Green Paper rightly focuses our attention on that change. I see an important part of that change being a much more detailed review of the existing decision-making processes within universities. I hope that my right hon. Friend will give thought to that as he considers the responses to the Green Paper.

8.42 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): The arrangements for higher education in Scotland are deeply unsatisfactory, and I am sorry to say that the Green Paper does not help to resolve the Scottish dilemma. Universities in Scotland, unlike the central institutions that are under the control of the Secretary of State for Scotland, are under the charge of the Secretary of State for Education and Science and, through him, the UGC. None of the Ministers in the Department of Education and Science is conversant with the Scottish educational system. It is interesting that the Minister responsible for education in the Scottish Office, who is present, is not to wind up, even though he has a distinct interest in the higher education system in my country.

The UGC circular of November 1983 was unhappy in its intentions when it gave universities a choice between self-multilation or starvation of resources. There is something even more offensive in it. Paragraph 6 says:

"Parts of this letter refer primarily to the situation in England and Wales. We would ask readers concerned with the different systems in Scotland and Northern Ireland to make the appropriate adjustments."

That is the sort of thing that those of us who are Scottish lawyers object to when the legal system of Scotland is amended as if it were an appendage to the English system. It does not work, and it causes distortion in the system.

The contempt that was first apparent in the UGC circular is extended by the Green Paper, which, although it is aware of the continuing review of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council, is unwilling to await the report. It directs that the council should follow the Green Paper. The Green Paper purports to deal with Scottish higher education, but its Scottish content is limited to some five paragraphs. Lip service is paid to the Scottish system and, to paraphrase the late Henry Ford, the Government obviously take the view that Scotland can have any kind of educational policy that it wishes so long as it is of English origin.

The Secretary of State is so notably interested in the Scottish education system that he has now left the Chamber. I point out to him that the Green Paper is deeply

offensive to anyone interested in education. It is also full of alarming statements. In paragraph 1.2, it asserts correctly—the Secretary of State has just admitted that — that the economic performance of the United Kingdom has been disappointing, and it then goes on to call for more technologists and engineers.

I agree that, for the functioning of a modern economy, we need experts in technology and the sciences to be available when required. However, it is not true that simply because one trains these people the economy will grow. In the 1950s, the university of Glasgow found that 80 per cent. of its technical graduates emigrated either to other parts of the United Kingdom or abroad. Therefore, while Scotland trained these people, its economy did not benefit because there were no jobs for the graduates. The Government should take on board the point that although there are advantages to the economy in training technologists, equally without an expanding economy the opportunities to use those experts will not be available.

Today I received an answer from the Department of Employment which showed that in the period between 1974-84, unemployment in the United Kingdom went up by 456 per cent., while in the European community countries it went up by 310 per cent. and in the OECD countries by 178 per cent. That underlines what has been said in the debate.

Strangely enough, the Green Paper is entitled, "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s", but as we have heard, over the next 10 years it is reckoned that there may be cuts in funding of 2 per cent. a year. That is an impossible burden to place on higher education institutions. It was interesting that, although the Labour party spokesman skated round it, he did not give an explicit assurance that the Labour party in Government would restore the previous level of funding for higher education. In that, he was echoing the remarks made by the leader of the Labour party a few years ago when he was spokesman on education matters.

The committee of vice-chancellors and principals made it clear in the document that it sent me that it has found that business cannot make up the difference in funding for core education and research that is not necessarily pertinent to its business affairs. The Government are ambivalent about where they are going with the funding of universities. Will they keep to the system that we have had in the United Kingdom or are they trying to bring in the American system in which far greater aid is available from the business sector?

Leaving aside the fact that, until recently, the business sector has been in considerable cash difficulties, we should point out that if the Government wish to encourage private donations or business donations to the universities and central institutions, they must give tax concessions equivalent to those available in other countries. I prefer funding to come directly from central Government rather than to be parcelled out in that manner.

It is difficult for universities and institutions—here I declare an interest as the rector of the university of Dundee and a member of the court in that capacity—to finance replacement of equipment. The university tries to do this for its main sectors of vocational and technological education. For the university to make good and bring up to date the equipment is virtually impossible on the funding currently provided by the UGC.

Even in revenue matters such as the funding of the library, although the university had just been granted considerable funds for a new library, it is finding difficulty in meeting the costs of stocking the library with publications. The prices of periodicals have increased substantially, well above the rate of inflation in recent years, yet the finance being made available for them has not. The university is now considering what periodicals ought to be cut out as a consequence of the cuts that have been made.

There is also the question of non-replacement when vacancies occur. That university like others is now having to consider the 2 per cent. cut which it is expecting in the first financial year. When a vacancy arose on the departure of a professor in the department of mechanical engineering —incidentally, one of the areas that are supposed to be expanded—the first response of the university was to considering closing the department to save money, whereas normally the intention would have been to strengthen it because students wish to get in to study engineering. I do not share the pessimism which was expressed recently in that regard.

The hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) made a very good point when he spoke of the problems that the universities face by having to refuse applicants on the basis of their higher grade examination qualifications because of shortage of places so that they go for those with the best academic performance at school. That does not necessarily produce the best graduates. Even disallowing the experience of the hon. Gentleman, who has such expertise in the matter, it prevents the entry of students who in my day would just have walked into university on certain qualifications and could have produced a good honours degree. They no longer get the opportunity of entry because they are deprived of access by their peer group.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): Will the hon. Gentleman concede that in Scotland not only is the total number of students in higher education at a record level but so is the age participation ratio?

Mr. Wilson: I am willing to concede that the central institutions play a part in that. Many students prefer to go to central institutions because they give a good education, but some who would have preferred to go to university no longer get in. Indeed, even though the numbers have increased, there is the effect, particularly in the last few years in which the birth rate has been so substantial and the bulge has come through, that some have failed to get into educational establishments altogether. I think that the Minister will agree that that is highly undesirable.

Next there is a difficulty in relation to teaching, and again I congratulate the hon. Member for Peterborough on his observations. If staff ratios worsen and it becomes increasingly necessary for staff to produce research papers in order to justify their existence, the amount of effort and attention that goes to teaching may decline. When I was a student at university, I took the view that the universities were there primarily for teaching and not for the purpose of research. Since then, I have had to amend my views a little in that respect. However, I think that the stage has been reached where research has become much more important to the universities than is the teaching of students.

With respect to numbers and the exchange that I had with the Minister with responsibility for Scottish

[Mr. Wilson]

education, I received information the other day that the Edinburgh group of the Royal Statistical Society was told on 14 May that major changes are to be made to the Scottish Education Department's statistical model which will likely show higher estimates of demand. It has not been possible for me to table a question to flush out exactly what those changes will be, but I hope that the Secretary of State in summing up may be able, from information supplied by his hon. Friend, to tell the House what changes in projection of demand there will be as a consequence of that review.

In summary, Scotland generally speaking has no confidence now in the UGC. In relation to the closure of the pharmacy department at the Heriot-Watt university, it proved itself ignorant and uncaring in relation to Scottish needs. The whole education system in Scotland is different. It cannot be governed in the same way as the English system. It requires different solutions. We know that the report of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council — STEAC — is due. The Green Paper is in a sense in limbo in relation to what will happen to Scotland thereafter.

I should like to urge on the Secretary of State and the Minister with responsibility for Scottish education the need to set up two bodies in Scotland — first, an independent UGC with proper interfacing with the research councils; and secondly, a body which is representative of the universities, the central institutions and all parts of higher education, with these bodies being responsible to the Scottish Office which, it is hoped, understands the whole pattern of education in Scotland. Until that is done, we will have disparate control, and higher education in Scotland will remain what it has been for the last few years, a decapitated rump without an ability to plan for itself the future which will obviously be difficult in view of the funding restrictions that the Government are predicting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): The Front Bench spokesman hopes to catch my eye at half past 9. Most speeches have been commendably brief, but I hope that those of other hon. Members will be even briefer.

8.56 pm

Mrs. Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): My credentials for participating in the debate differ slightly perhaps from those of other hon. Members since I have been a governor of one of 29 polytechnics, and, I think, can claim to be one of the founder members of the National Advisory Body. That is the basis on which I wish to declare my interest.

I welcome this opportunity — although not the Opposition motion—to discuss the Green Paper on the development of higher education. It brings to all hon. Members a welcome opportunity to put their points of view.

I spent some time reading the paper carefully. I realise that it contains too much for comment on each section. I should therefore like to confine myself to three areas. The first, and most important in my view, relates to the second section of the paper which develops the thinking on the place of higher education in the economy and subject balance in our future. Although later in the paper there is mention of what has happened to mankind in the last few decades, I think that insufficient emphasis is placed on the phenomenon that now faces us. It seems to me that progress defined as the increase in the ability to replace new techniques by new machinery and advanced scientific application to almost every aspect of our daily lives has had a traumatic effect on how the individual fits into our society. Let me explain that.

During the past 50 years medicine has advanced dramatically so that life is, happily, extended well beyond the expectations of the majority, and certainly for the less well off matched against their counterparts of 100 years ago. Similarly, our everyday life is wholly different. Machinery has been developed that transports us long distances in a relatively short time. It has changed the whole domestic scene, bringing up women from the slower processes of home making and altering for both men and women the management of leisure.

At work, technology has made redundant many of the time-honoured skills and the general pace of life demands constant change and adaptability by the human being.

It will no doubt be said that society has experienced all those changes in the past, and indeed it has, but I am not certain that the change has been so rapid that it spans only half the life expectancy of men and women so that each person can see evolution speeded up at a rate as yet unknown.

The reason why I have spent these few moments on that is that I believe in looking at the future of higher education, and it is imperative that that factor is taken into account. Thus the whole theme of production of qualified manpower should be geared to an understanding that a qualification at 21 may be quite useless at 40.

The heavy reliance placed upon higher education in the Green Paper as a basis for the innovator and the entrepreneur strikes me as a little false. Although I can understand that many good graduates may well turn out to have these skills, it is not a prerequisite of the entrepreneur that he should have first been through the educational hierarchical route. Furthermore, emphasis is placed also on the employer wanting graduates with special skills relating to the expertise of industry and commerce. I believe that that is not necessarily always the case. Most employers look for manpower that is capable of being trained and adapted to the special needs of the individual or company concerned. That is something that we should think about as a philosophical point.

I come now to those who enter higher education and express concern at the lack of good teachers in both mathematics and sciences. That is undoubtedly true, and it is even more true that girls are more quickly disposed to abandon mathematics and science earlier than boys. Two matters need to be stated now. Children lose motivation for subjects at a much earlier stage than is generally recognised. I guess that between the ages of seven and eight it is possible to switch a young child off both mathematics and science. The importance of good teaching of those subjects needs to be considered well before secondary school begins.

Secondly, while the objective of a broad curriculum is highly desirable, we must begin to accept that if we are seriously looking for a body of highly skilled academics for the 1990s, we must start some process of weeding out the bright children throughout the spectrum of our school system, rather than allowing so many potentially bright

children to remain undiscovered. The hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) highlighted that point rather well.

It is hardly surprising that we cannot attract enlightened teachers into schools where the discipline is non-existent and the facility for seeing the fruits of one's teaching through the successes of one's pupils is constantly denied, especially when other factors such as pay and the general esteem of society for teachers are at their lowest ebb.

While words that suggest that the country needs more able scientists, more engineers, technologists and employers should be the ones to inspire the youngsters, I frankly think that we are not looking at the problem with any real hope of solving it. That hope lies in the abandonment of half-witted political dogma and the realisation that the raw material exists but needs to be discovered early enough and then cultivated in the right atmosphere much more ruthlessly than this country has acknowledged for the past 30 years. If we grab that nettle, perhaps some employers in future will show an interest in the processes of our schools and universities.

Following through my theory that education will have to respond to change at least twice for individuals during their lifetimes, the plans for the pursuit of mature education in the Green Paper and the career vocational study are much to be welcomed. In particular, like my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), I am pleased to note that sandwich education is to be looked at once again. It has always appeared to me that the argument that it was not cost-effective was simply a management problem, not an education problem. I believe that educationally there are bound to be students who benefit enormously from that type of higher education course.

I also welcome the enthusiasm shown for distance learning. Undoubtedly it is one of the advances that we can encourage with modern technology. It is relatively cheap as a method of updating, reproducing and overhauling the knowledge that students have acquired throughout their working lives.

The last area of interest that I single out for mention touches on the management of the institutions. Obviously, as my right hon. Friend said, the Government are taking note of the Jarratt report which has outlined proposals for change in the planning and management structures of universities. Rightly, the idea of stated objectives and structures to enable management decisions about allocation of resources has been outlined.

Speaking from quite a bit of experience in management on the other side of the binary line in local authority higher education institutions and, in particular the polytechnics, I observe that it is not before time. However, I stress that as with any other organisation the most important task for those who have the interest of managing public money and how it is spent, whether it be in schools, universities, polytechnics, or colleges of further education,is to ensure that the top management is of the highest calibre.

Vice-chancellors, polytechnic directors and heads of colleges need to be men and women with a range of academic and management skills that enable them to identify readily the needs of the institution. Whether it be on management of money or the planning of courses in conjunction with the rest of the country, it is their judgment that will affect the quality of staff and the final outcome of the student intake. With leadership of the highest order there should be coupled experience and a broad spectrum of people on the governing bodies who can make decisions and judgments about quality and quantity and at the same time can be relied upon to exercise effective controls on both capital and revenue expenditure in the same way as a board of directors holds responsibility for the same areas in any business.

For the better health of all institutions at this level of higher education, I welcome the consideration of the present system of tenure. It seems to be an admirable idea to link tenure with other institutional experience. Men or women on loan from commerce and industry both here and abroad will enable much wider spectrums to be seen. Certainly it is high time that the younger men and women coming through the universities should be given the hope of promotion and an understanding that a breakthrough either in research or production will be recognised not merely by academic acclaim, important though that is, and not in any way decided, but by the possibility of sponsored professional chairs for the front runner to encourage others to follow.

Whatever be the broad thrust of the Green Paper, the simple message that I would add to it is that if the United Kingdom wishes to compete with the world in any respect it must recognise and encourage excellence in a way that has been positively discouraged for far too long, especially in our schools and universities, and all too often for entirely the wrong reasons. Let us remedy that error and perhaps the future will look much brighter and more positive to the youth of tomorrow.

9.8 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): What I say will be concerned mainly with universities. Lest any of us on these Benches are accused of dwelling too much on universiy education, I stress that we are mindful that higher education consists of both sectors. Many of us want to see the binary system abolished, but that is another matter. Equally, it is not sufficient for the Secretary of State to say, after five or six years in office, that he is thinking about mature entry into higher education. Continuing education and adult education should have been dealt with many years ago, but again I have no time to talk at length on those important topics.

The debate has been very interesting. Conservative Members have introduced some useful points but they have been talking about the subject as from a distance, without knowing what was going on at ground level and what disillusion is being felt by teachers and researchers in higher education. *[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members raise their voices in amazement, they are not just ignorant: they are showing their ignorance. I do not want to accuse Conservative Members of being ignorant but such sedentary interventions only confirm what I suspect to be the case. It would be a great deal better——

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The Opposition do not give way to non-sedentary interventions.

Dr. Marek: If the hon. Lady wishes to intervene, I shall give way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This only delays the speech that is being made and prevents other hon. Members from speaking.

Dr. Marek: This is an important matter because the Secretary of State has said that he needs to spend public money sensibly. It is difficult to take exception to that statement, but what does he mean by spending public

[Dr. Marek]

money sensibly? It has been said that we need to spend money so that industry can immediately take advantage of research. Hon. Members have asked where the money is to come from. That is another way of trying to cover up what is happening within the higher education sector.

Money must be found, because if it is not found for higher education and adequate research, this and the next generation may not pay for that failure but following generations will pay dearly. Some research is immediately applicable to industry. Other research may be applicable later. The hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) may have got near to the point but not many other Conservative Members did. We do not know whether some research will be applicable. Nevertheless, such research is highly valued by almost every other country and it should be valued by this country if we are to remain in the forefront as an industrial nation.

The Association of University Teachers sent me a copy of a letter from the Prime Minister dated 7 June 1983, just before polling day, when she was a candidate for Finchley. I dare say that other hon. Members had a copy of this letter.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): It is not worth the paper that it is written on.

Dr. Marek: It may not be worth the paper that it is written on, but I shall quote it. It is addressed to Mr. Hennessy, who is a regional official of the AUT. Its title is:

"Funding for the university sector in general and those institutions in the London area"

The Prime Minister states:

"After decades of expansion, there has been scope for the elimination of waste and more effective use of resources both in universities and in polytechnics and colleges. Given this fact, and the general need to contain public spending, the Government decided in 1981 that, (in addition to removing indiscriminate subsidies for overseas students)"—

how shortsighted that is. If Conservative Members looked at the graphs of overseas students in the United States, France and Germany and saw how they have increased, could they say that all those countries are wrong and that this country is the only one that is right? Not on their life. We are the only country that is wrong. We shall pay for that dearly when those students who should have been studying in this country order all their equipment and goods from other countries once they have graduated.

The letter continues:

"spending on higher education over both sectors should be reduced by about 8½ per cent. in real terms over three years."

The Prime Minister then says:

"But the period of contraction is now nearing the end. In 1983/84, we are spending £2·75 billion on higher education; and the intention"—

I hope that hon. Members will listen to this clearly—

"is to hold the level steady in real terms after 1984/85."

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition called the Prime Minister a twister. I should like to ask the Secretary of State whether she is a twister. What has happened? Why is there a change? Why do we have the Green Paper when I have a letter, which is ostensibly a copy of a genuine article, that says:

"the intention is to hold the level steady in real terms after 1984-85"?

What is happening? Can it be that the economy is not what the right hon. Lady thought in 1983 it would be? I would not be surprised if that is so, because the more the Government cut, the more people are thrown on the dole, the less the Government have in taxation revenue and the more the Government have to cut. That has happened ever since the Conservative party took office.

If that is not the explanation, and the economy is buoyant, as the Chancellor tells us, why was that letter written in that form, saying that there would be constant funding after 1984-85? Why has the University Grants Committee written to the universities saying that they should budget for cuts of 2 per cent. until the end of the decade? I do not understand what is happening, and I should be grateful to the Secretary of State if he told us what is happening.

In point 2 of the letter, the Prime Minister referred to

"increasing access to university courses for those living in the London area".

The tenor of her argument was that access for those students would be increased. I hope that the Government stand by their commitment. They have patently not stood by that commitment during the past two years. Many students who could have gone to universities in London and elsewhere have not been able to do so. They may have managed to get into courses elsewhere in higher education, but they have been denied access to the universities.

The Government have produced various figures showing that student numbers will decline. That prediction has been made not for just the next few years but for the next decade and a half. With what certainty do the Government think that they are right? It is possible that, in 10 years, there might be a higher take-up of adult education places. If so, the Government should budget and ensure that there is a provision for those future students.

Sir Keith Joseph *indicated assent.*

Dr. Marek: The Secretary of State nods his head. I welcome that agreement. I hope that he will say something about this matter, because there is dismay throughout the higher education sector about the cuts that have taken place.

Instead of carrying out research and giving proper attention to teaching, many university teachers wonder whether they will be able to keep their jobs — and, indeed, whether there will be jobs in two or three years. There is much to be said for an interchange of academics and mobility between universities, but those jobs may be temporary and without security of tenure. What will the Government do about that?

Academics wonder, even if they do not move, whether they will keep their jobs. Their salaries have been eroded. I am not saying that their salaries are too high or are inadequate. In April 1979, the maximum salary of a university lecturer was 98·5 per cent. of the maximum salary of a principal in the Civil Service. By April 1984 that percentage had fallen to 87 per cent. I have not checked whether those figures are accurate. Civil servants are also not happy with their wage increases. The average earnings of university teachers have fallen by 36·5 per cent.

We cannot run a country with research and teaching in higher education, which is vital to our continuing prosperity if there is continual unhappiness about levels of salary, conditions of work, the moral benefits of having a job and the lack of pride in not having a job. I wish that

I could get that point across to the Government. We are creating this problem not just in higher education but throughout society.

Will the Government pursue a policy which, in two or three years, will cause those who work in higher education to take pride in their jobs and to say, "We are doing a good job, and we are happy with it."? At the moment, they have failed to do that. If they do not manage to do that, not this generation or the next one, but succeeding generations will pay dearly for the short-sighted policy set out in the Green Paper.

9.19 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): In a debate on such an important subject as higher education, we must not neglect historical or international perspectives. The roots of our education spring from our language, which continues to give us influence in the world, and from our culture which continues to make a considerable contribution to civilisation. Together, they produce the branches of education, arts, science and technology which we can give to the world. The education that we export to other countries either directly, or indirectly by accepting overseas students at our institutions of higher and further education, not only promotes our cultural influence, but creates markets overseas.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: And good will.

Mr. Key: Yes, and good will. Students familiar with British products and equipment, and with British ways of doing things, will become leaders and opinion-formers who will buy British and create jobs here.

There are at least three groups in British society that are outstandingly internationalist. The first are the exporters of the industrial and commercial community. The second is the cultural community, and the third is the academic community. They are all interrelated, and they all win friends for Britain. Indeed, British business men seeking to penetrate overseas markets have problems with the British Overseas Trade Board and the Export Credits Guarantee Department, because they are constantly helped less than their competitors inside and outside the European Community. While many exporters give fulsome praise to the work of embassies and consulates in their commercial support, they also pay tribute to the pro-British climate that has been created by British education, whether acquired in Britain or overseas, and by the work of the British Council.

There is much misunderstanding about the work of the British Council. Only 13 per cent. of its activities are concerned exclusively with the arts. Most of its work is about people, notably students, teaching and libraries, but also about official visitors to Britain. I should stress that it is not the English Council; it is the British Council, and it should include more activities, for instance, in Wales and Scotland.

Recently, the British Council's Government grant has been cut by more than 20 per cent. Consequently, English language teaching has been cut, British Council libraries have less money, and academic and youth exchanges have been reduced. But there is a plus factor. The British Council has increased its revenue considerably and has started some imaginative schemes for funding by sponsorship of English teaching. One example is the joint project by the Cambridge local examinations syndicate and Suntory whisky for an English language institute in Japan, managed by the British Council.

The Green Paper acknowledges all that in its section on overseas students. The Government have decided that such students, welcome as they undoubtedly are, should not be subsidised by the British taxpayer. Instead, the Government are committed to a policy of targeted support that meets the needs of overseas countries.

Indeed, there has been a sea change in our contribution to international education in recent years. That is evident from the British Council's market surveys of overseas demand for, and perceptions of, British higher education, and its establishment of an education counselling service in three pilot centres in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore. It is also evident in the new approach of the Overseas Development Administration. I have the honour to be one of the three parliamentary chairmen of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth, and I must say that there has been alarm and despondency at the large reduction in overseas students in Britain, largely following the replacement of marginal costs by full-cost pricing, which has led to the significant salting away of money in some of our universities.

However, in discussing higher education with the Council for Education in the Commonwealth, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development explained how he is targeting his contribution towards encouraging a skilled, literate and environmentally aware work force in the recipient countries. His educational advisers are seeking new priorities and programmes overseas, with clear objectives and time limits that fit into national development programmes. That can only be an improvement.

We should acknowledge the considerable and largely unknown ways in which our higher education is promoted overseas and why it is so highly valued. The British Council and some universities operate the key English language teaching scheme. In countries where English is not usually spoken, such as Indonesia and Brazil, they operate the English for special purposes scheme. It is important because non-English speaking nations are rapidly becoming aware that English is essential for education in advanced science and technology.

Paid for by the Overseas Development Administration, London university recently organised a conference at Cumberland lodge, which brought together the education Ministers of eight African countries faced with rising demands for education and dwindling resources. The results will be published shortly in a book entitled "Education Priorities in Sub-Saharan Africa".

The Government support in-country training and third country training, where it is more convenient or appropriate to establish regional education centres such as the university of the West Indies or the university of the south Pacific, which are partly funded by the United Kingdom. For more than 25 years, the Commonwealth scholarship and fellowship plan has facilitated student mobility — it currently funds 800 students at British universities and medical schools.

The Pym package of 1983 led to an important increase in student numbers. The Department of Education and Science continues its scheme for research students and the British Council has its highly successful fellowships programme. There are now some 16,500 overseas students in Britain, 71 per cent. of them from Commonwealth

[Mr. Key]

countries, but it is important to help more overseas students, especially from developing countries. That is why I am especially pleased about the fact that, in answer to my parliamentary question, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development was able to announce yesterday the introduction of a new scheme called the shared scholarship scheme. Up to 450 scholarships will be available over five years, funded jointly by the Government and universities and polytechnics that wish to participate. They will probably seek commercial sponsorship and partnership and a closer relationship with their local industrial and commercial communities.

The scheme is a start but, in the interests of higher education and the country, student mobility should increase. I hope that when Commonwealth education Ministers meet later this year during the UNESCO general conference, they will ask themselves whether they have achieved the objectives that they agreed on in their Nicosia communiqué of last July.

The Green Paper is a tough and realistic document born of the hard reality that the population of university entrance age will fall by more than one third in the next 12 years. No Government could afford to ignore that stark fact, so we should not get carried away in condemnation but should consider the positive proposals that have been presented for discussion in the Green Paper. It is not a short-sighted or defeatist policy, and I urge the House to support the amendment.

9.27 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I have a college of further education, a college of higher education, and a university in my constituency. I am sceptical about the Green Paper. The consequences of cuts in 1980-81 and again in 1984-85 are serious for higher education. There have been numerous course cuts and place losses at the university in Hull.

I feel sorry for the young people who are affected. I vividly remember seeing the disappointment on the faces of 18-year-olds with A-levels at a school that I visited last year. When I had the privilege to go to university, entrance was simple compared with what those kids have to go through. It is disgraceful that top calibre people are being wasted. It is wrong that people should be treated in that way. It is no wonder that there is a "Why bother?" attitude among young people.

There are not enough qualified people in Britain. A recent report compared the number of qualified people in Japanese and German industries with the number in our industries. A tremendous gap must be filled particularly in the technological industries about which we hear so much.

I am worried by the staff cuts at the Hull college of higher education. The student-staff ratio is moving towards 12:1. That is being achieved by not replacing staff. That reduces the course options. The consequence is a loss of skills and an aging teacher population. The new blood and new degrees are not there to refresh our universities and colleges.

I talked to people connected with our colleges today before taking part in the debate. Morale has been affected by the cuts. The cuts create pressure for teaching at the expense of links with industry and consultancy work. That is serious. Morale is affected because the number of career opportunities for college staff is restricted.

Expenditure per student at the Hull college of higher education is falling. Although there was a general increase in the amount of money spent between 1980-81 and 1984-85, it has not kept pace with the increased number of students. That means serious cuts in support services such as career guidance and counselling, the milk round —which is costly in terms of man hours—links with employers and the general environment.

The Green Paper will not result in an improvement in higher education in Hull. I see it as an excuse for cutting expenditure. I referred earlier to students who had lost their opportunity. The cuts mean that future students will also lose their opportunity.

9.33 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The Secretary of State received a poor reception for his Green Paper when he presented it to the House last month. The press also gave it a poor reception. Only *The Sun* came out in its defence. Tonight few hon. Members have given unqualified support for the Green Paper.

At times during his speech it was doubtful whether the right hon. Gentleman was in favour of his own Green Paper. Sometimes he talked more about the sections that had been cut out than about the contents of the Green Paper. He must admit that the Green Paper is a bad harbinger of doom and despair for higher education and for the economy. It discusses cuts and the general malaise in our economic climate into the 1990s. Surely the Government should at least be hoping that their monetarist policies will work.

The Green Paper is not only about cuts but about a total reversal of Governments strategy over the past 100 years. There has been almost a political consensus for 100 years that we should expand higher education and recognise the intrinsic worth of education and its importance for our economy. Now, suddenly, the Government are talking not about a few short-term cuts because of economic difficulties but about a long-term strategy of contraction in higher education. The fact that we should single out from the Green Paper is that total change of attitude.

There were cuts in the resources of the polytechnics and colleges of higher education right from the start in 1979. There were savage cuts in university funding in 1981. It seems difficult to take seriously the Government's claims that they want to put resources into science and technology when three of the science and technology universities suffered the biggest cuts. The people at Bradford, Salford and Aston are now asking, having had those savage cuts, whether they will have to take 2 per cent. cuts each year for the next three years.

We were told by the Government that those cuts were to get round the short-term economic problems. There is no talk in the Green Paper of hoping to restore those cuts. Now the UGC is talking about 2 per cent. cuts over the next three years, probably the next five years. The NAB is warning the Government that standards are falling in polytechnics and colleges of higher education because of the shortage of resources. Finally, on top of all that, the Government are talking about wanting to cut the numbers of students in universities by 14 per cent. in the 1990s, and cutting resources by that amount. That is the most disturbing thing. It might be difficult to keep up the number of students, but we should pump in the resources to make sure that we can attract more students. It may well

be that developing more science courses will be more expensive, but we should be talking about maintaining level funding for those institutions into the 1990s.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I ask the hon. Gentleman to pause for a moment over the age participation rate. Does he deny that the previous Labour Government cut it from 13·6 per cent. to 12·6 per cent? Does he further deny that now the Conservative Government have raised it above the target set by Robbins and are aiming for 15·5 per cent. by 1999?

Mr. Bennett: If the hon. Gentleman wants to talk about the age participation rate, the most useful thing to do is to look back to the target that the Prime Minister set in 1972. She talked about a participation rate of 22 per cent. as the aim. I accept that there have been mistakes and disappointments in terms of short-term cuts, but what is wrong with the Green Paper is that it is not setting us a long-term target of trying to move up towards that 22 per cent. figure. It says that 15 per cent. is the most that we can hope for in the 1990s. Surely we must get back to a policy in which we try to expand higher education rather than complacently talk about cutting the resources that need to go into it.

I should like to move on to a series of specific points in the Green Paper. I refer first to the number of students. The key is the level of Government support for students, particularly the missing section in the Green Paper about the level of student support. Almost everybody believed that the Green Paper would come out in January, then the Government said that they could not produce it in January because they wanted to include a section on student support. That was perfectly valid. If the Government put off publishing the Green Paper until May, why did they still leave out the section on student support? The suspicion that is growing in the country is that the Government want to slip out their proposals on student support in August, at a time when there will be least opportunity for students to protest and for the Secretary of State possibly to get into the same difficulties that he faced in the autumn. The Secretary of State must explain to us whey he has not come forward with his proposals for student support, because if it was important that the section on support should be an integral part of the Green Paper in January, why is it not there now?

My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) referred to participation among working class youngsters. The Secretary of State talks about improving the participation rate, but to make that a reality some financial support must be given to encourage youngsters to stay on at school. In Tameside in my own constituency, about 24 per cent. of 16-year-olds who achieve good O-level results do not stay on in education. If they obtained good apprenticeships or other opportunities, that would be fine, but many of them end up on the less reputable YTS schemes or in unemployment. I wish that the Government would encourage youngsters with working class backgrounds to stay on to obtain a further education and participate in higher education.

The Government must also address themselves to a far greater degree to the participation rate among ethnic minorities as well as to the problem of attracting mature students. The Green Paper pays lip service to this but does not refer to resources for further education to give mature students a second chance or to the problems faced by the institutions. The Secretary of State must address himself to how we can make it financially possible for mature students to enter universities and polytechnics. That aspect of student support is also missing.

The Green Paper also contains two of the Government's obsessions, one of which is sponsorship. They seem to think that sponsorship which may work for snooker or football can apply to many other areas. They began by wanting more and more sponsorship for the arts, and took away Arts Council funding. They are now talking about sponsorship or advertising for the BBC. Does such sponsorship exist within industry, and does industry have the money to pay for it? There is no evidence that industry will pay.

The Government should stop this obsession with sponsorship—or perhaps the Secretary of State intends to come to the House wearing a sweater advertising a brand name product and claim that he is the sponsored Secretary of State. The right hon. Gentleman should recognise that, once there is sponsorship, the sponsor becomes the dictator and the manipulator.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Bennett: No, I shall not give way.

The Government also want to bash the trade unions and other unions. I am surprised at their attack on students unions' sabbatical officers. During my visits to academic institutions, I have been struck by the high quality of most sabbatical officers. More often than not, the good sabbatical student union officials ensure that those unions are effective, democratic institutions which cannot be hijacked by a small band of extremists.

The Secretary of State talks about the importance of freedom of speech in the universities and students unions. I agree. However, the last time that I was shouted down at a students union meeting — also attended by the Under-Secretary — it was by the Federation of Conservative Students. It organised the hooligans on that occasion.

Mr. Patrick Thompson *rose*——

Mr. Bennett: No, I will not give way.

Does the Secretary of State now accept the views of the visiting committee that the Open university is doing a first-class job? If so, why is he not prepared to come up with the money so that development can continue in areas such as PICKUP and the turning of its loan into a grant?

The right hon. Gentleman also talks with great enthusiasm about switching from the arts to the sciences, but he does not talk about the cost implications. He does not point out that in many cases science courses are nearly twice as expensive as arts courses. Such a switch will either mean a cut in the number of student places or that the new science courses will have to be run on the cheap.

The right hon. Gentleman must also address himself to the fact that there is a shortage not of scientists but of those with an arts education who are literate in the sciences and technologies. It is most important to encourage people who receive arts degrees to study further and make themselves literate in science and technology. In the Green Paper the Secretary of State firmly talked about discouraging the longer degree courses. Although their attraction is that they try to bridge the gap between the arts and the sciences, he attacks them most.

Will the Secretary of State comment briefly on his views about pay? Several hon. Members raised that

[Mr. Bennett]

question, and its implications for morale. He should consider that both the Green Paper and pay problems are beginning to make many people who work in universities and polytechnics extremely disillusioned. Evidence shows that in some key areas of science and technology, on which he is so keen, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit staff.

Will the Secretary of State tell the House who has given the Green Paper an enthusiastic welcome? When did he convince the Prime Minister that her target in the 1970s of 22 per cent. was wrong, and that the most that we could aim for was 15 per cent.? Why, after six years of the Government's monetarist policies, must we set our targets for education for the next 10 years increasingly low, rather than raising them and our expectations?

9.45 pm

Sir Keith Joseph: I shall try to answer as many questions as I can in the time available.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud), in a not altogether friendly discussion on the Green Paper, pointed out that the universities would like to be able to engage at least 900 more lecturers and senior staff during the next period. He was right. However, I must tell the House that during the same period about 700 vacancies are expected to occur. There will still be a worrying gap, but it will be of the order of at least 200, rather than at least 900.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) in a good speech—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I always find his speeches well worth listening to. Although he and I would disagree about some of the reasons behind his diagnoses, he always makes a solid diagnosis. He reminded the House that we are still far from achieving the common standards of citizenship to which Robbins and his committee aspired. The hon. Gentleman spoke of his aspiration for more and more of his constituents to attend higher education. He will agree that if that is to come to pass, as we all should like—there is no reason why his constituents are inherently inappropriate for higher education—we must make our schooling more effective. Both sides of the House will agree with that. The Opposition may criticise us for having aspirations and yet not being able to find the resources which they think are necessary. However, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the way to worthwhile higher education for more people is through better schooling.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) asked some awkward questions. He asked why Brunel university had not been selected for sharing in the switch money. The invidious matter of selecting universities, and in due course some polytechnics, for sharing that money was carried out by the University Grants Committee on behalf of the universities and by industry.

Industry has had the invidious job of identifying those universities which it judges could most usefully receive the switch money. Against the background of not enough money being available and having to spread it widely, the choice has been made. It is no discredit to Brunel; there are some very strong competitors.

My hon. Friend asked why more higher education skills have not been used to modernise British industry. Indeed, it is a question which goes to the heart of our relative failure over the past four decades. We can all make speeches on the combination of reasons, and I am sure that successive Governments have played their part in those discouragements, but one has to identify patchy management as one of the factors. No doubt management would say that it has not been altogether encouraged by the attitude of trade unions. At any rate, I think that we are now all agreed that there should be more links between business and higher education, and that is manifestly taking place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) made an awkward intervention. He asked how a decision might be made in due course if any institutions, in the Government's view, had to be closed. It is not yet clear whether any whole institutions will need to be closed, although that may be necessary to preserve standards as student numbers fall. The Government would, of course, discuss with the UGC and the NAB the way in which judgments about scale and scope are to be made. The criteria governing all such judgments—those concerning expansion and selectivity as well as rationalisation and closures — should, in the Government's view be excellence, fitness for purpose and cost effectiveness. Where institutions, departments and courses are excellent, fit for their purpose and cost-effective, they need not fear for their future, regardless of whether they are in the university or the public sector.

My hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) thought that higher education institutions should be able to manage change. He echoed, effectively and eloquently, the views expressed by the Jarratt committee. In its report, the committee suggested the ways in which institutions could, without losing the decentralised judgment making which occurs in higher education institutions, decide together the best way to deploy their resources. I commend the Jarratt report to my hon. Friend and to the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) rightly focused on quality and effectiveness in the schools, and spoke with particular interest about the scope that there still is to encourage girls to participate more fully in some parts of the curriculum which they have tended — probably under parental pressure and expectations—to neglect in the past. The trends are moving in the right direction. As my hon. Friend knows, more girls are studying the sciences, the technologies and engineering, but there is much more room for them. We are giving every encouragement so that there may be movement in the direction that my hon. Friend wants. I have a large number of examples, if she is interested in them.

The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) asked several questions. If eligible demand grows—he was particularly interested in adult education — the Government will certainly review policy, as they have said in the Green Paper. On a Green Paper basis, they are making some projections based on trends, in so far as they can be predicted. If the trends prove to be too pessimistic, the Government will review policy.

With regard to overseas students, as my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) said in his interesting speech, an addition was announced yesterday to the number of overseas students for whom we shall provide finance.

However, I do not want hon. Members to mislead themselves. Although there has been a fall in the number

of overseas students attending universities since 1979, that number has recently started to rise again. The number still here, including those who are paying their own way, is not so dramatically below the 1979 figure as was predicted at the time.

The hon. Member for Wrexham also asked me to deal with the Prime Minister's letter to the Association of University Teachers and explain why level funding has not been provided. Since that letter was written, the public purse has incurred a number of expenditures that were not predicted at that time—for instance, the small matter of the miners' dispute—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) belongs to a party which suffered more than hiccups during its last period of office. In one particular year it had to cut expenditure on higher education by no less than 8 per cent.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) shared the disappointment of A-level students who have not obtained sufficiently good examination results to gain places in higher education. I accept, as was pointed out by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson), that A-level results are merely the least bad indicators that are available. It is realised generally that they cannot be wholly replied upon. Nevertheless, surely we must agree that there have to be certain standards for entry to higher education and that those standards must be reached.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) asked me when the student support finance paper will be published. I hope that it will be published by the end of next month. He also asked me to comment upon the visiting committee's views on the Open university, which it highly esteems. However, he failed to point out that the visiting committee also said that the Open university is unable at the moment, because of its management arrangements, to cost the different options that are available to it. It said that, provided that the Government stretched out the reductions—in other words, did not impose them so quickly—the Open university should be able to cope with all that it wanted to do by making economies. The Government have met the recommendations of the visiting committee, and I hope that the Open university will now be able to cope.

I now wish to deal with a point that was emphasised by the hon. Members for Dundee, East, for Denton and Reddish and for Durham, North. The hon. Member for Dundee, East asked whether we really expected private money to be put into universities and polytechnics to help them to support their building programmes. The hon. Member for Durham, North once again emphasised that more money from the taxpayer should endlessly be made available. He said that the Government should not predict a fall in the number of students, even for demographic reasons, and that therefore there should be more spending upon education. The fact is that under successive Governments huge funds have been provided for higher education, running into billions of pounds. They should surely result in more efficient management, as has been identified by successive committees. Against that background, is it really the view of the Opposition and of the hon. Member for Dundee, East that the Government should not encourage higher education to raise, if it can, more money privately?

Mr. Radice: Will it?

Sir Keith Joseph: Not only will it, but during 1983-84 the universities raised an extra £54 million in that way. This is not a total answer, but it shows what can be done.

The Opposition are still hooked on the old 1960s fallacy that more means better, but more does not necessarily mean better. That is why it is essential that, if more is spent, it should be accompanied by the policies to make sure that more is better. The Opposition have ignored those policies; I hope that the House will reject the motion and accept the amendment:

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 176, Noes 254.

Division No. 226] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Anderson, Donald
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William

Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Bellingham, Henry
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Richard
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Emery, Sir Peter
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its policies for ensuring that higher education is better managed and more attuned to the needs of the economy, for maintaining and enhancing standards, and for broadening the criterial for access to higher education; urges Her Majesty's Government to continue to seek ways of making more effective use of the resources available for higher education; and welcomes the framework for the future development of higher education set out in Cmnd. 9524.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Coal Industry Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Orders of the Day

Coal Industry Bill

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Clause 1

DEFICIT GRANTS TO NATIONAL COAL BOARD

10.15 pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I beg to move, in page 2, line 16, leave out '600' and insert '400'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 2, in page 2, line 20, leave out '800' and insert '600'.

No. 3, in page 2, line 20, at end insert—

'(6A) No order shall be made under subsection (6) above unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that supply of, and demand for, coal have been brought into reasonable balance.'.

I remind the House that these are narrow amendments.

Mr. Fallon: At least one reason for moving amendment No. 1 and speaking to amendments Nos. 2 and 3 is that not only is the Bill reported from the Committee unamended but no amendments were even considered in Committee. Therefore, there was a danger that had no amendments been tabled for the Report stage the full implications of clause 1 might have passed unnoticed.

The power in subsection (1)*(a)* is not unreasonable, in that the group deficit of the board in the last financial year is known or is at least capable of being ascertained because the date is past and the money has been spent. Beyond noting its enormity — the ceiling of £1·2 billion established in subsection (4)—there is not much that the House can do about it, having supported the Board and the Government in the year of the miners' strike.

Whereas that may be so, the power in subsection (1)*(b)* is of a different order, in that it is in effect a licence to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for deficit funding of the board in two forthcoming years, one of which has barely started. Deficit funding in itself has long been recognised as a far from ideal way of financing a nationalised industry. In this case, it means that in each of the two forthcoming financial years the incentives are to a certain extent removed for prudent financial management by the Board, for cost saving and for improvements in the Board's financial and budgetary arrangements as proposed by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report.

Confronted with such proposals, if the House is concerned, as it should be, with the enormous sums that are to be handed over to the Secretary of State for him to forward to the board, it seems that the House can do only one of two things—either it can tighten the monitoring arrangements to make the Board's budgetary performance month by month and quarter by quarter more accountable and more transparent to the House, or it can tighten the ceilings that my right hon. Friend has proposed in the Bill.

I accept that the former course is difficult. Day to day management of the board's affairs is a matter for the board and not for the Department, let alone for the House. The extent of the Board's technical insolvency is now such that I believe the House is looking to the Department and to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to assure us that the monitoring arrangements which already operate will be conducted more rigorously and on a more regular basis than for some years. I hope that he can persuade me that the moneys being provided are being properly and necessarily spent. I am sure he will be able to reassure me on the scope and persistency of the monitoring arrangements. Nevertheless, the second course, that of tightening the financial ceilings proposed in the subsection, is obviously the course that should be preferred.

Amendments Nos. 1 and 2 merely provide that the ceilings in each case be lowered. It may be objected that the reduction proposed is as arbitrary as the ceiling. However, there is some merit in reducing the original sum which is to be lost in the next two years—some £600 million, which is nearly 10 times the amount that De Lorean lost in four years, is to be lost by the coal board in two—by one third or some £200 million because that represents the minimum improvement that could be achieved in the board's performance by a greater liberalisation of its activities, by the expansion of its profitable activities, for example, the open-cast operation and by the improvement of its marketing and sales arrangements.

Amendment No. 3 seeks to make the final increase of £800 million — £600 million if amendment No. 2 is accepted by the House—dependent upon my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State satisfying himself that demand and supply in the industry had been brought into reasonable balance. That might be thought to be a rather radical amendment to be tabled on Report for a Bill of this kind, but it is a Bill which prints public money for the board—this time to the tune of some £2 billion—but which yet again does not touch upon the duties of the board as laid down in the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946.

As I believe I pointed out on Second Reading, the Bill is deficient in that it does not address itself to that problem. The board is charged under that Act with the duty of securing the efficient development of the coal industry. However, a board which has come to the House virtually

[Mr. Fallon]

every two years has failed in its principal and mandatory duty and is as insolvent on its statutory basis as it is financially insolvent.

Ample evidence has existed from the late 1970s, from the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1983 and the events of the past 12 months to show that the duties imposed in the 1946 Act are not just out of date but are redundant and that a new statutory framework is required.

Amendment No. 3 seeks only to provide the minimum foundation for that framework.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): *rose——*

Mr. Fallon: I shall not give way, because I am just finishing.

I should have thought that it was a condition which any extractive industry would welcome and could meet. I hope that such a condition might be a preliminary to a more general review of the legislation underpinning the board, might also serve as a sign of good faith to an increasingly sceptical taxpayer and might find favour not just with my right hon. Friends but with the House.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): I intervene briefly for the sake of accuracy and for the information of the House. It is not true that no amendment was tabled in Committee. A new clause was tabled. The hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) might have studied the report of the Committee stage before he made that statement.

Mr. Hardy: I did not wish to speak, because I had hoped that the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) would have been gracious enough to allow me to intervene merely to ask him to tell us what he means by the word "reasonable". He talks about the demand for coal being "brought into reasonable balance". My hon. Friends and I are eminently reasonable people. We should have liked to hear the hon. Gentleman's definition of "reasonable", as it may not be the same as ours.

One important factor in the decline in the demand for coal to which the hon. Gentleman did not refer is that the level of industrial activity in Great Britain today is much lower than was anticipated when some of the costly investment schemes began. For example, the demand for engineering steel made by the electric arc process, which indirectly consumed enormous quantities of coal, has been slashed dramatically and, therefore, the demand for coal has decreased dramatically. If unemployment remains at the real level of 4 million and industrial levels of activity stay as they are, our coal production may be higher than was planned a few years ago when unemployment was markedly less and industrial activity was markedly higher than today. The hon. Gentleman gives counsels of despair, because if there is not some economic and industrial recovery, it will not be the coal industry alone but his party that will be in jeopardy. The electorate, not just people from the coalfields, are not prepared to tolerate the current levels of activity and, therefore, the current low levels of demand for energy.

We must have an element of forward vision. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State, even in this benighted Government, has more vision and hope than the hon. Member for Darlington displayed in his sad and sorry amendments.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) will concede that the careful consideration that a Committee gives to an important Bill of this nature cannot be judged by the number of amendments that may or may not have been tabled, because I believe that the Bill has had the most careful scrutiny. The fact that it has been greeted with approval by both sides of the House demonstrates the good will that is attached to this great industry, especially at this crucial stage. I can readily understand that hon. Members feel impatient with successive requests for additional deficit grant for the NCB. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington that these requests must cease. I reiterate the Government's firm objective that the NCB, like any other commercial enterprise, should earn a satisfactory return on its assets in real terms after payment of social grants. Only by returning to profitable enterprise and operation can the NCB offer lasting jobs and good wages to those employed in the industry.

It is in the interests of no one, whatever his political views, for the NCB to be dependent upon continuing handouts from the taxpayer. There is a pressing need to put matters right, to regain markets and to recover lost ground. During this period of reconstruction, it is right that the Government should continue to support the coal industry in the manner that we propose in this legislation.

The figures proposed in the Bill give an upper limit of £600 million on deficit grant payments for 1985-86 and 1986-87. Although the Bill provides for that ceiling to be raised by up to £200 million, in the first instance we look to the NCB to live within the £600 million. Any increase beyond that level must be subject to debate in the House. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington recognises that it is still too soon for the NCB to assess with any precision how fast production can be restored and those important markets rewon. I very much hope that we shall soon see the end of all industrial action in the industry so that everyone can move together in the right direction. In the meantime, it will be difficult to arrive at precise estimates of the level of loss this year and next. The figures in the Bill are no more than a framework within which the board must operate. We believe that £600 million is, in the first instance, a sensible and realistic ceiling. I shall expect the NCB to do everything it can to remain within that figure.

I move to the other comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington. Clearly, balancing supply with demand is one essential part of the NCB's return to viability. It figures in the objectives given by my predecessor in this office and given to successive chairmen of the board. For the coal industry to be profitable and to be able to provide lasting jobs for its employees, it is essential that the key problems of excess capacity and the high cost of uneconomic pits be tackled.

10.30 pm

However, it would be wrong to link that aim to the provisions for deficit grant, as amendment No. 3 does. As I have told the House several times, we have given the National Coal Board the objective of breaking even without the need for deficit grants by 1987-88. That must be our central goal. If we are to secure the future of the industry, bringing supplyand demand into balance is

clearly an important component of the task. But other factors must be included, such as productivity, efficiency, reducing costs and achieving a proper return on assets.

Moreover, I must tell my hon. Friend that it is not for the Secretary of State for Energy to judge the future demand for coal and to require the NCB to tailor its production accordingly. Those judgments are the responsibility of the NCB. The Government's role is to set the objectives, not to specify in detail the means of achieving them.

Officials from my Department and the National Coal Board meet regularly every month to review the year's figures and especially to compare performance against forecasts. All the figures supplied by the NCB to the Department of Energy, as the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) will know, are subject to thorough and critical scrutiny. Detailed financial planning and monitoring is, of course, a matter for the National Coal Board. However, I stress to the House that the public expenditure implications are such that we must be satisfied about the overall financial position.

I share the anxiety expressed on both sides of the House that the present state of the coal industry serves neither the taxpayer nor those who work in the industry. But the problems can be solved. We have given the NCB the firm objective of breaking even without deficit grant by 1987-88, and we expect it to meet that objective. But in the meantime it is right to make the deficit grant provisions set out in the Bill. I hope that, in the light of my comments, my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington will withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Fallon: I am sure that the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) will wish to check exactly what I said. I did not say that amendments were not tabled, but that amendments were not considered by the Committee, which is very different. I should tell the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) that I accept that measuring the reasonableness will be a difficult concept, but I did not rule out an increase in demand. What I wished to establish through amendment No. 3, which I notice he did not completely reject, was some relationship between supply and demand, whether supply increases or demand increases.

I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his assurances. I agree with him that the framework is there, although we might disagree about how tight it is. I especially welcome his expectation that the board's expenditure should remain within the lower figure in clause 1 for as long as possible, and the way in which he dealt with amendment No. 3. He did not seem to rule out the importance of the relationship between supply and demand, although I accept that the principal balance should not necessarily be linked with the deficit grant in the way that it must be to meet the technical requirements of the Bill.

Having said that, and with the assurances from my hon. Friend on the monitoring arrangements and the thorough scrutiny that he has promised, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

10.34 pm

Mr. Eadie: The Opposition were conscious on Second Reading and in Committee that the industry badly needs this money. Because of that, we have given the Bill a fair wind. Because of the Bill's financial implications, however, hon. Members were able to debate the coal industry.

The Minister has made little attempt to answer the points that have been raised. We asked about investment, new pit sinkings, power station generation from coal, the pit closure programme and the statement of the chairman of the National Coal Board which appeared in the *Sunday Telegraph* of 10 March. We asked about manpower envisaged for the industry, about the output that is anticipated during the next five years, how many pits will be left and, of course, what the Government are doing about victimised miners.

I said on Second Reading that we could understand the Minister not being able to answer all of our questions in his winding-up speech but that he might like to write to me or deal with the issues that had been raised in Committee. Anyone who glances at the Minister's speech in the second sitting of the Committee will be struck by the poverty of his reply. I have had no letter from the Minister. We are therefore entitled to charge him with failing to give the information for which we asked and for allowing the chairman of the NCB to walk all over the Department of Energy.

As to the victimised miners, I quoted the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946, the consultation and the conciliation procedures; and all we got was the bald statement that they did not apply during the strike. There was no attempt to say why victimised miners cannot be represented and have their cases dealt with in accordance with natural justice. The Minister and the Secretary of State echo the line of the chairman of the NCB more than common sense. Their line has been that victimised miners had recourse to industrial tribunals.

Ministers seem to sit back with their arms folded, pleased that they have given the House the advantage of their worldly wisdom. I have news for them—they can start unfolding their arms right away. I attended the public sitting of the Select Committee on Employment to which Mr. MacGregor gave evidence, which makes it clear that, although an industrial tribunal found in favour of a victimised miner, the chairman was not prepared to give an assurance that he would reinstate the man.

I should add that Mr. MacGregor said to the Select Committee only what he told me personally at a meeting that I had with him. Industrial tribunals were further debased at that sitting of the Select Committee. I took down what the chairman of the NCB said in cross-examination. I hope I have it right. He said,

> "I believe most of my employees are law abiding and therefore I do not need to go to industrial tribunals to find out what goes on. I would not want to insult them by thinking they are all criminals and would have to go through industrial tribunals."

That is a disgraceful public statement.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Why?

Mr. Eadie: How long can the Minister support Mr. Ian MacGregor in his capacity as chairman of the NCB? I am asked why. Is the chairman of the NCB to be allowed to say that industrial tribunals, set up by the House of Commons, are the only bodies which can discuss criminals who have recourse to an industrial tribunal? That is disgraceful.

[Mr. Eadie]

The Minister said that he would take up individual cases of victimised miners. I questioned him yesterday at Question Time. I asked the Secretary of State for Energy "following representations to him for reinstatement of sacked miners arising from the miners' strike, how many have been reinstated as a consequence of inquiries to the National Coal Board."

The Minister replied:

"I understand from the National Coal Board that of the 1,013 employees dismissed for offences related to the dispute, 373 have subsequently been re-employed."

That was not an answer to the question which I asked.

I came back and asked:

"Will the Minister tell us about the cases that have been referred to him?"

The Minister made specific promises at Second Reading and in Committee that he would take up the cases of victimised miners referred to him. I asked him how many cases he took up and in how many cases there was reinstatement. I said:

"In Scotland, he has failed abysmally, because no miner has been reinstated following a request by the Minister."

The Minister replied:

"I have taken up every case that has been referred to me. I should tell the hon. Gentleman that all of us have been impressed by the responsibility of the vast majority of miners, who are now working together to repair the damage caused by the strike." —[*Official Report*, 3 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 20.]

That is a classic example of doublethink. Even at the second attempt the Minister could not tell me how many victimised miners had been reinstated as a result of his request. That is deplorable.

We have been the rounds on the Scottish aspect of the problem. We have met the chairman of the board of Scotland, Mr. Wheeler. We have also met Mr. Ian MacGregor. We have met the Secretary of State for Energy and the Secretary of State for Scotland. Since the Department of Energy wishes to abdicate its responsibilities we are asking for a meeting with the Prime Minister.

I wish to put on record a letter sent to the Prime Minister by the Scottish group of Labour MPs. It reads:

"There is a great deal of disquiet about the high number of dismissals in the Scottish Area of the National Coal Board. There has not been a single re-instatement which is out of line with other areas, and there is a strong feeling that justice has not been seen to be done. It has been repeatedly said by NCB officials in Scotland that all dismissed miners were guilty of serious offences against working miners' their families, or Board property. Recent written answers from the Solicitor-General for Scotland have established that in Scotland, of the first 603 people convicted as a result of the industrial dispute, only 38 involved offences of violence or vandalism. This does put a question mark against the circumstances in which many of the Scottish miners were dismissed. In the light of this, I ask if you would be prepared to meet a delegation from our Group to discuss the situation. Exchanges at Question Time give the impression that you too have been misinformed."

The responsibility for misinforming the Prime Minister lies with the Department of Energy.

The letter continues:

"I am sure you appreciate that this is not an issue in which concern is confined to the Labour Movement, but it also shared by many Scottish Church Leaders and a call for re-consideration has come from three Chief Constables in Scotland.

I hope, therefore, that you will agree to meet our delegation and look forward to your early reply."

The letter is signed by the secretary of the Scottish Labour group.

I am grateful for the tolerance of the House in listening to that quotation. It is deplorable that the sponsoring Department is not able to inform the Prime Minister or do anything. It allows the chairman of the NCB to walk all over it, yet it is the sponsoring Department. A group in the House, having met every agency available in the House, has to go to the Prime Minister and tell her that she has been misinformed, and ask her for the opportunity to present her with the facts on victimised miners. That is an indictment of the Department.

The answers that we are getting are a classic example of what has been happening during the passage of the Bill. We suspect that the Minister cannot produce from anywhere in Britain a single case where his intervention has resulted in reinstatement for a victimised miner. When I referred to two cases, which I quoted on Second Reading, the Secretary of State told me that if I was dissatisfied I should take up the matter with the chairman of the NCB. If that is not an abdication of responsibility, I do not know what is.

The House is about to give the Bill its Third Reading in the knowledge that the industry is still gripped in an industrial dispute because NACODS feels that it has been betrayed by the NCB in relation to an agreement, described by the Government is sacrosanct, on a modified colliery procedure on pit closures. I mentioned yesterday at Question Time that the overtime ban, decided by a ballot vote of NACODS members, was costing the nation about £24 million every week. It is humiliating that the Secretary of State seems to be paralysed about taking any action to make the NCB keep its word, which was agreed in October 1984 under the aegis of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. The Government, with the NCB, claimed that conciliation and consultation were suspended during the strike. With the strike now over, they seem to be still buried. The Minister goes about the country speaking to miners in the language of conciliation and consultation, yet they are buried, and the Department stands back and allows the NCB to bury the spirit of conciliation and consultation.

This industry of ours—I say "of ours" because many of my hon. Friends, like myself, spent a lifetime in it before we were fortunate enough to be elected Members of this honourable House—is crying out to get back to normality. What are the Government doing about it? We do not know yet what output is expected of the industry. We do not know yet what manpower is expected to be retained. We do not know yet officially how much manpower will be shed, or in what areas, and we do not know how many pits will close, the numbers to be retained, or in what areas, despite the substantial sums of money involved in the Bill.

The Government's reluctance to give us information —I say this more with regret than with anything else— and the statement in the Bill about breaking even in two years lead us to believe that the Bill is designed to contract the coal industry. This is a pit closure Bill. It seeks to restrict coal production and cause job losses in many mining areas. The Minister is the third Minister responsible for the coal industry in the last six years. It is logical to assume—I say this without personal rancour —that he will not be in office to defend his handiwork when the Bill's life expectancy expires—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may giggle when I say that I make that remark without personal rancour, but I mean it. I speak to the Minister in his capacity not as an ordinary hon. Member, but as a member of the Government. Although the Minister may have left office in two years'

time, many of my hon. Friends will still be here. We will be seeking to defend the industry because we believe that the nation needs a strong and powerful coal industry.

The Bill will involve the payment of large sums of money as a consequence of the miners' strike, yet the Government give little information to Parliament. I advise the Minister to read the analysis of the miners' strike, by the Fraser of Allander Institute, which is not a predatory Left-wing organisation. The hon. Gentleman deceives himself and, more importantly, the House of Commons if he believes that there is now a proper industrial relations climate in the mining industry. Even at this late stage, we appeal to the Department of Energy, as the coal industry's sponsoring Ministry, to exert its authority, to deal with the problems of the NCB, and to get the industry back to normality.

10.52 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I shall detain the House for only a few minutes, but there are several points arising from the Bill that I wish to make.

As the House is aware, the Bill comes before us after 12 months of strife for miners and their families. That cannot be refuted by any hon. Member. In some coalfields, many members of management take the view that for the victor there should be the spoils. As a result, we now have the worst industrial relations in the mining industry since I joined it 46 years ago. If Conservative Members do not believe that, it is obvious that they do not understand what is happening in the mining communities.

There are several points to which we have a right to expect answers, even though the Minister failed to answer some of them in Committee. If it is the Government's policy that the mining industry should break even by 1986-87, they should tell us what that means. How many men will remain in the industry and how many pits will be closed? I cannot accept that the Minister is unable to give these figures, because I am sure that the chairman of the NCB has totted them up and knows full well how many pits will be closed by 1986-87. I believe that the figure is far in excess of any figures which have previously been given to the House.

The Government's policy is wiping out mining communities. In my own area — and some of these decisions have been taken since the strike ended—seven out of 10 pits are now on the closure list. I shall give the names of the pits, and if my information is wrong, I invite the Minister to refute it. The closure of the Ackton Hall pit, which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Woodall), has been announced. All that the small township of Featherstone has is that pit. In the late 1800s, miners in it fought for their jobs and some were shot and killed by soldiers for defending them.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): So were the Luddites in the textile industry.

Mr. Lofthouse: I shall treat that remark with the scorn it deserves.

When the pit closes, that small town will have nothing left.

The other pits to be closed are the Savile colliery, the Glasshoughton colliery and the Ledston Luck colliery. Wheldale colliery and Fryston colliery are to go within four years. The Government are wiping out not only the pits, but their communities. When the pits disappear the communities will be in a similar position to that which they faced during the strike. The local economy will be destroyed. During the strike the local chamber of commerce showed that if the pits closed, between 25 and 30 per cent. of all businesses would close. During the strike the local economy was denied the income of miners, and now it will be denied their income through pit closures, which are part of the Government's economic policy.

The House has a right to know what the Government intend to put in the place of those communities, which will face such devastating blows. Do not tell me that between £5 million and £10 million has been made available to the National Coal Board enterprise scheme. We need clarification of that. I was disappointed that the Minister would not accept new clause 1 in Committee, when my hon. Friends asked for that sum to be increased to £50 million. That is not a large sum, considering the great tasks that face the mining communities. It is not good enough to say, "We shall meet the demand when it comes."

What is the NCB enterprise board doing? Is it waiting for people to borrow a specified sum to set up a company? The areas involved are not attractive to other industries. Those areas receive no Government grants. The Government cannot deny that mining communities will be wiped out. They have a responsibility to put something else in their place.

I admit that for many of the older miners—men of 50 and upwards—the blow will be cushioned by the Bill and by the redundancy payments scheme, but what is to happen to the youngsters in mining communities who would usually have found their way into the mining industry, bearing in mind that, apart from a few odd pockets here and there, there are no other industries for them? What are we creating in the mining communities where youngsters can see no hope whatever of employment? They are not asking for attractive employment; they are asking for a chance to go into a hole in the ground to work, because there is nothing else in those areas. The Government's policy is denying them that chance.

The Government have an obligation towards the mining areas. If they fail them, they will be storing up trouble which it will not be possible to control. I hope that the Minister will do better then he did in Committee and answer some of the questions that I have put to him. It is not sufficient to say that we have Selby in the north Yorkshire area and that men who wish to go there can do so rather than be made redundant. That argument is wearing a bit thin, because I understand that we are talking of about 3,500 or 4,000 members in that coalfield, and there are about 16,000 men in the north Yorkshire area.

If the jobs of 10,000 of those men are to be destroyed, something must be put in their place for the youngsters who are leaving school without any hope whatever. If the Government fail to consider those youngsters they will have failed miserably. Ian MacGregor was appointed to butcher the industry and the livelihood of men who have relied on the pits all their working lives. The Government are destroying something that no one should have the power to destroy.

11.1 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): We are addressing the question whether the Bill should be now

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

read the Third time. Although several criticisms have been made of it, I do not thank that any hon. Member will say that the Bill should not be read the Third time, or that anyone will vote against the motion. I think it is recognised that the money has to be expended in the industry. The one hon. Member that I thought might argue for the opposite course is the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), but perhaps even he will not go so far as to resist the expenditure of the money.

For the expenditure of the money to be worth while, the working atmosphere in the industry has to be improved. Those who were critical of the strike strategy into which the National Union of Mineworkers locked itself might, I suppose, have expected that the factor that would militate against getting a better atmosphere in the industry after the strike would be the attitude of the majority in the NUM —those who resented the fact that others worked during the strike and disagreed totally with that strategy. It might have been expected that the real difficulty would come from that quarter, and that many problems would be faced in many pits, with some of the ghoulish threats uttered during the strike being carried out, and with men being prevented from working after the strike because they had worked during it. But I think we all know that that is not what has happened. Many of those threats proved to be as empty as they were foolish.

Unfortunately, there is now another problem, and it is being created by the NCB itself. In many areas of the industry, the board is in two ways preventing the establishment of the atmosphere that it needs to have in order to get the industry back on its feet. The first is the board's handling of the sacking of miners who were accused of vandalism or violence during the dispute. It is beyond argument that the board's handling of the matter has caused sufficient concern for criticism to extend far beyond those who supported the strike or who are associated with the coal industry. It includes church leaders, chief constables and others who express reservations and doubt about the board's attitude. The difference in attitude between different areas of the board illustrates that it is possible to handle the problem in better ways than has happened in some areas, notably in Scotland. Unless there is a pulling back from the collision course on which the NCB is involved in certain areas, the re-establishment of a decent working atmosphere in the industry will not be possible.

Secondly, the NCB has given the impression that it is seizing the opportunity provided by what for the board was a successful outcome of the strike, to bypass and avoid any procedures which will in any way slow down the process of closing collieries. I say that despite partly sharing the view of both the NCB and the Government that some parts of the industry's capacity are such a drain on it that they represent an obstacle to the future success of the industry.

There are pits which have to be closed, but in recent weeks the NCB has made it harder for the right atmosphere to be created in which the industry can be restructured and get going again. Various devices have been used. The excuse has been used of damage done during the strike. The claim has also been made that a colliery is not being closed but de-manned. For example, Bates colliery in Northumberland is not being closed, but voluntary redundancy and the opportunity for miners to go elsewhere are bleeding the colliery of its labour force. It will reach the point where it has no future.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Bates colliery announced on 22 May that it is to close.

Mr. Beith: I was using the original decision of the National Coal Board about Bates colliery to illustrate that there is more than one way to skin a cat. Initially, it avoided announcing its decision to close Bates colliery by using the redundancy procedure to reduce the number of men working in the colliery so that closure would eventually become inevitable. That procedure was widely and understandably seen as bypassing the review procedure. The new NACODS dispute is precisely about that issue. A union which adopted a highly responsible attitude throughout the dispute is now involved in a separate dispute over colliery closures. It demonstrates clearly that the NCB has handled this aspect badly, too. Unless the NCB pulls back on both those matters, the opportunity to get the industry going again will have been lost.

There must be investment in the future of this industry. As I argued at question time on Monday, there is no sense in closing collieries with high production costs unless one creates capacity with low production costs. Therefore, it is essential to open collieries in areas which provide such an opportunity. I argued that coastal collieries in the north-east would provide that opportunity. The Minister has been to Ellington recently and has seen what has been achieved there. I have pointed out to him that, if another colliery were to be opened at Amble, more opportunities of that kind could be provided. Such collieries would provide employment in that area and they would also be within daily travelling distance for men in Blyth who have lost employment opportunities through the closure of Bates. They would also provide employment for men in other parts of the north-east. We must invest in new capacity in order to create a competitive future for the industry.

We must also invest in the communities which will suffer as a result of closures. That is why it was right for my right hon. Friends the leaders of the Social Democratic Party and of my own party and also for the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) to argue that the scale of investment in NCB (Enterprises) Ltd. must be much higher than the Government have conceded so far. The pace of development of that organisation must be sufficient to ensure that it can make effective use of much bigger financial investment.

The coalfield communities are ready to take up every opportunity and to explore every avenue in order to provide help where it is known that closures are to take place. Differences about the strike strategy have been set aside in the colliery communities. People who adopted different views during the strike are getting together on the principle that, whatever happens, they must work for new employment to be provided in those areas where closures are to take place. The NCB and the Government must match that determination by investment in communities whose future will not lie in coal mining. It is a tremendous task, but if it is not undertaken the social damage caused to a crucial part of our nation will be enormous.

11.9 pm

Mr. Jack Thompson: It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). I should like to refer to a few of the points that he has made and follow them through. They relate to the expenditure of £1·2 billion that is provided for in the Bill. Having worked in the industry for many years, I believe that this considerable sum of money ought to be used in a slightly different way from that suggested by the National Coal Board. The NCB can be criticised for the way in which it has spent the money that was made available to it in the past.

I hope that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed and my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) will allow me to move into their constituencies, because my constituency is between the two. I have only one colliery left in my constituency, and in the whole of Northumberland, since 1947, we have gone from having 70 pits to five. I accept that some were closed under a Labour Government, but most of them were closed because of exhaustion. It is a very old coal field—the Romans took coal from it, and we have taken coal from it ever since.

Some of the collieries that were closed are now being open casted. The economic argument about that is fair and reasonable—one can argue the pros and cons of open casting certain coal or continuing to deep mine it. My constituency has the biggest open cast site in the whole of Britain but the coal that is being taken is the residue left when the collieries closed.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed spoke of the coastal pits, which are a different proposition. Some time ago, a colleague of mine was sitting on the same Committee of which I was a member. He was unaware of the facts of the coal industry. I spent 20 minutes trying to convince him that we took coal from under the sea, but I did not succeed. Many people are not aware that one can extract coal from the sea bed. It is common practice on the north-east coast.

In the constituency of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, Lynemouth colliery used a particular technique for working under the sea called a board and pillar system. In that, one uses coal pillars in the working to support the sea bed. The planners decided to carry out total extraction. Some of the coal fell behind the face workings and caused a spontaneous combustion. There was a fire, and the southern part of the mine was closed. Before the fire started, the chairman of the coal board said that the mine had 80 years' worth of reserves left. The workings of the southern part had to be flooded to prevent the fire from spreading. The mine was closed in 1983, with the loss of 500 jobs, although some of the men were redeployed.

Those jobs were not lost because of the inefficiency of the miners, who at that time had the record for productivity, in a profitable pit. During the strike, the illusion was given that where mines were being closed because they were uneconomic, that was the fault of the miners. It was not. It was because of poor geological and dangerous conditions, bad management and planning and so on.

Another reason is the definition of uneconomic pits. Last week, the Minister visited a mine that in 1950 was not worked because it was held to be uneconomical. The coal was available to the private mine owners, but they did not use it. However, the coal could be used for power stations, and after the second world war, the demand for that market began to build up, and the pit became economic. Now, the workings are six miles out under the North sea and about 1·25 million tonnes of coal a year comes out of the pit.

What will the future give us? The Bates colliery, in the other side of my constituency, in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley, has about 29 million tonnes of coal, again under the North sea. The NUM has not said that—the NCB has. Apparently, no consultation was made about the closure of that pit. That situation—and I refer again to open cast—is not a possibility. The coal reserves will be written off completely. The mine must be closed. It is six miles under the North sea. When that colliery closes, the working and the reserves that are left will be flooded and lost for ever unless at some time in the future another King Canute can push back the North sea. With those reserves having been written off and with new technology coming along and new developments almost daily in the coal industry, we have to look to new markets in the future.

I will be interested to hear the Minister's comments about how much of this £1·2 billion will be invested in experimentation and research into issues like gasification of coal, liquefaction of coal, the fluoride bed combustion systems and new techniques and ideas as to the ways of using coal. In my view, future generations will look rather askance upon that pit closure and the loss of those coal reserves, given the views and attitudes of the current intake. We cannot in future afford to write off the coal reserves that we are writing off these days in the old mining areas. It is too much to give away. It is a sheer waste.

I am somewhat sceptical about the proposals that are being put forward now in terms of opening new mining areas such as the Selby coalfield and areas in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire at the expense of the old coalfields. some of this coal can be economically worked. At the Bates colliery in February 1984, before the miners dispute, there were discussions about reducing the manpower and about the new equipment that was available. Experimentation had taken place in that colliery because of the bad roof conditions, and there was success in coping with the conditions. Just over one year later in May 1985, the divisional director of the coal board made an announcement that the colliery was going to close. What had intervened, of course, was the miners dispute. One wonders whether it is a question of revenge or victimisation in terms of the attack, as I would describe it, upon the miners who work in that colliery.

We have to consider carefully the value of the coal industry as a whole. I read in a recent report produced by an independent source that the demand for coal in the next 15 to 20 years will go up because the other resources are going down. The other facilities of oil and gas, but excluding nuclear energy, are going down, so there are two options, coal or nuclear energy. Massive resistance is building up in the country towards nuclear energy, so we are left with coal.

11.17 pm

Mr. Fallon: The last two speeches reflect the widespread concern of all parties with regard not only to the resources that have been provided under the Bill but

[Mr. Fallon]

to the way in which those resources have been allocated in the past and the way in which they are likely to be allocated by the board and by the Government in future.

I have to disappoint the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) in that I never had any intention of voting against the Bill tonight, but I should certainly vote for it with greater confidence if I were clearer about the future of the industry for which these resources have been provided.

While the scale and scope of the industry—and this point has been made by Opposition Members—remain so uncertain, and while its ownership, structure, management and marketing remain more or less the same as they were when it was established nearly 40 years ago, I cannot see how we can offer those who work in the industry any longer-term guarantee of job security and satisfaction under the new arrangements than we were able to offer them under a loss-making nationalised industry in the past.

I fully understand why my hon. Friend has been unable to go into these matters during the long and tragic miners' dispute or, indeed, during the passage of the Bill, whose primary purpose obviously is to restore the finances of the board as a consequence of that dispute. However, I hope that when he sums up, or in some future debate, he will give us some inkling of the Department's longer term thinking. I should like to know, for example, what is happening to the sensible recommendations that were made by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in its report in 1983; when the review of the opencast operations is likely to be completed, and what the implications are for the licensed operators and local authorities; when the small mines are likely to be further liberalised; and, above all, what steps can be taken to give the miners a much more genuine and realistic stake in the industry.

11 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): To a certain extent, I sympathise with the Minister. I believe him to be the piggy in the middle. I have heard the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister say from the Dispatch Box — not so much now, but in the past two years—that uneconomic pits must close.

I sympathise with the Minister because he is not really party to that decision—he must, as the Minister with responsibility for coal, just get on with it. I give him credit for having got around the industry. He has been to see what it is all about and how it works. Recently he said that he had visited a certain pit. Indeed, in Committee he said that he had made visits to other pits. He has even been to a school for Nottinghamshire miners, talking to them about the mining industry.

The Minister knows as well as I do that I and many of my colleagues worked for many years in the mining industry, and we experienced the bad old days and the good days. Many of us were responsible for setting up first-class industrial relations in the industry — and it worked. The miners participated in all decisions at local, area and national level. That has been destroyed by the Government's policy on the energy requirements of the nation.

The real problem is that bloke from America. The sooner that we return to proper discussion about where the mining industry is going, the better we will all be. But we need to get rid of the shackles. Make no mistake: the men in the industry will not play ball with a deceitful chairman of the NCB dictating to the board, the area directors and the men. My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) was correct: the chairman is walking over everybody. The Secretary of State and the Department are allowing that to happen. That can go on for so long, but then it will blow up in his face. There is ill feeling in the mining industry at pit level.

I wonder who is in charge. I have listened to Ministers and I have read some of the things that the chairman of the NCB has said, and I am convinced that he is walking over everybody. It is time that he went. I am sure that the Minister believes that in his inner self. We must return to some normality.

The Government are living in cloud-cuckoo-land if they believe that the mining industry will break even in 1986-87. It will not work. I worked in a big hitter with a production of 1 million tonnes a year and big profits, but it had a bad year with low production and its profits disappeared. That can happen to any highly profitable pit at any time. I can remember that when we went back after our fortnight's holiday the pit was never normal. We lost strip after strip of the coal face before we got back to normal. Sometimes it took a month.

The hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) had the audacity to submit amendments to reduce the amounts proposed by the Government. He has not got a clue. He is talking about finances and not about pit production, pit communities or how the industry works. He does not know the facts. If he had had experience in the mining industry, he would not have submitted those amendments. He would have had a completely different point of view. My hon. Friends and I are expressing views gained from our experience in the mining industry over many years.

The break-even policy that is proposed is almost unachievable. Two or three years ago the Prime Minister withdrew a long list of proposed pit closures. The hon. Member for Darlington was not here then. More money was given to the National Coal Board to help it on its way. Those pit closures were not carried out. Many were withdrawn after argument from this side of the House and also from the Government side about what the Government wanted to do. If the Government intend to follow that policy now, they will achieve their figures, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) said, they will destroy mining communities and put more people on the dole.

It is all right to talk about the redundancy money that will be provided, but that is not the be all and end all of it. A pit in my constituency is to close within eight weeks. Just down the road in the Broxtowe constituency another pit is to close at about the same time. Those pits are not far apart. When they are both gone there will be no other employment in that area. In the past when the youngsters left school they went to those pits, but they will not be able to do that in future. Where will all those youngsters get jobs? What will we do with the youngsters who cannot get work in that area?

The Government may talk about £10 million enterprise money. When I heard that those pits were to close, I went immediately to the chief executive of the district council to get him to apply for enterprise money. I knew that the board had made up its mind, with the agreement of the trade union, to close the pits; I must admit that the union had agreed.

There will be no jobs for the kids leaving school unless additional or alternative industry is brought in.

There does not seem to be any reaction; I have not heard a word. This has been going on for weeks. I am waiting for the chief executive to tell me what will happen. The board representative has been in the area, but we are still waiting to hear what will happen. No action has been taken and the closure is only eight weeks away.

The Government and the board need speeding up. The £10 million will go nowhere. We need much more money. What worries me more than anything is from where we will get the coal when we need it if the Government and the board get away with the pit closures that they want. I can remember the days, which are not that long ago, when we could not produce enough coal to supply the nation's industry. What did we do? We imported it and affected the balance of payments. I believe that the extension of nuclear power is behind the Government's thinking. That is what I believe is wrapped up in the Government's policy.

I have a good memory and I remember the Prime Minister talking about 10 new nuclear power stations. Other people might have forgotten that, but I have not. I have remembered it because I believe in the mining industry and the country's energy requirements.

If the Government want to expand nuclear power, they had better have another think because people are reacting against such policies. The Sizewell proposal has been going for a long time and still has not been agreed. Inquiries go on and on. It is all right to accept a pressurised water reactor which people in the United States will not accept because of what happened at Three Mile Island. It is said, "Let them dump it on our shores because we will have it." We need only one mistake because we are a small island. We shall be in one hell of a mess with the problems involved with nuclear power.

I hope that I have spelt out my feelings about the Bill. I am not rejecting it; I am accepting it because it means more money for the industry to help it on its way. The Government must think again about the nation's future energy requirements. We shall need every cobble that we can produce in the future. If we do not have the pits to produce those cobbles, the future speaks for itself.

I am trying to look at the matter sensibly. I am not a Luddite. I have worked in the industry. I know how it works. I understand it from A to Z. I have worked on every job underground. I know what I am talking about. I have served on numerous committees to discuss progress with the National Coal Board and any face that we should stop. Before we stopped one face, we opened another to replace it so that the men could transfer.

The board guarantees a job elsewhere to any man who wants to stay in the industry when his pit closes. The Minister did not say at the Dispatch Box or in Committee that if a coal face worker on £200 a week transfers from a pit that is to close to another he will enjoy that £200 a week at the other pit. That man has a reduction in his standard of living. There is an agreement whereby he is protected for 12 months, but after that if he is in a lower paid job he is on lower earnings. People are thinking about that again. It is an encouragement for them to take redundancy. The manpower therefore decreases. That is what the board and the Government want. The result will be that we shall be short of the coal that we shall need desperately in the future.

I do not know how many times I have said that the Government have closed down industry. That is why they are not calling on coal for their energy requirements. The Minister says that slowly but surely industries are returning and they need coal. What will happen when industries clamour for coal, which is the cheapest fuel that we can provide? From where will the Government obtain that fuel? We shall import again. The Under-Secretary of State shakes his head. We have imported before and, if we are not careful, it will happen again.

I am putting over this message in the best way I can. I know what I am talking about, and that is why I felt that I had to make this speech. I played a part in Committee. Some answers were given, but some questions were not answered in the way hon. Members required. There were difficulties in some matters, and the Minister was not able to give the requested answers. I understand that, because we have been told that we cannot have the answers to questions that we have asked about welfare benefits. I understand what is going on in the Government's mind and why they are deceiving the workers in the industry and the nation generally about the mining industry.

I wanted to be brief, but I have not been. I am sorry about that. I wanted to get this off my chest. I wanted to remind certain Conservative Members—not the Under-Secretary of State, because I do not think that he believes this—who believe that we are a load of rabble and Luddites who are just having a go at the Government that we have thought this matter through sincerely. The Government are going in the wrong direction. The NCB is also going in the wrong direction, but it is supposed to be under the direction of the Department of Energy. That is not true. It is the other way round—the NCB is running the Government. I hope that there will be a change. I hope that the Government will get the message that the NCB will have great difficulty in achieving the objectives that the Government want the industry to achieve. I hope that at some time the Government will accept what is said and will change their mind so that the coal mining industry will flourish and we shall produce every cobble of coal that is required. It is a matter not just of the United Kingdom's requirements but of winning overseas markets.

11.37 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I hope that the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) does not feel that Government Members have any doubt about his sincerity. Those of us who have listened to him in debates over a number of months recognise that he speaks with great sincerity. We certainly would not class him as in the rabble-rouser category. However, I preferred his style of delivery tonight to his previous style. The sotto voce approach is more compelling than the megaphone-type amplified argument that we have heard in the past.

I disagreed with much of what the hon. Member for Ashfield said. I hope that, as we accept his sincerity, he will accept the sincerity of Conservative Members which has been well articulated by my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon). My hon. Friend has spoken for a great many Conservative Members who, throughout the life of this Parliament, have felt great concern about the level of public expenditure. We have had great debates on a succession of issues. There were, for example, many outcries and great agonising about the savings of £39 million in the education budget. Tonight we are talking

[Mr. Gerald Howarth]

about expenditure of £1,200 million in the current financial year and possibly £800 million in the next financial year. I know that Opposition Members accept that those are substantial sums. Therefore, I hope that they understand that Conservative Members who express views about the Bill are interested in the industry but are also interested in the wider issue of public expenditure and the need to curtail it, and the need to ensure that the industry gets back to financial equilibrium so that we can allocate resources to other areas. To spend this volume of money on one industry is to concentrate resources somewhat unhappily, when there are so many other claims on the public purse.

Although much anxiety has been expressed by Conservative Members, we welcome the commitment made by my hon. Friend the Minister tonight to ensure that the board makes every endeavour to meet the targets that have been set. I sympathise with the suggestion of the hon. Member for Ashfield that the target of reaching a balance by 1986-87 will be hard to achieve, but I wish my hon. Friend and the board every success. We shall give them every encouragement to do so.

There has been much rhetoric from Opposition Members about the destruction of the industry. However, the figures prove that the Government, far from being anxious to destroy the industry, have demonstrated their commitment to it by the sheer size of the grant that we are discussing. A comparison of this sum with the amount that was spent by the Labour Government makes it clear that the Government have committed themselves to the industry with a large slug of taxpayers' money. In 1978-79, total grants were £172 million; in 1983-84, the figure was £1,146. Those figures demonstrate clearly the concern of the Government, especially when they are set against the Government's determined efforts to restrain public expenditure. It is not true that we are talking about the destruction of the industry.

I understand how Opposition Members and the mining communities feel about the destruction of communities where the one industry is the pit. Since the war, in my constituency, 10,000 jobs have gone from the coal industry, and not one day's strike has been undertaken over those losses. I accept that, in the past, in the west midlands there have been other jobs to go to, and that that is not true of localities where, if the one pit closes, there are no other jobs. However, in some areas, major employing industries have closed, and those affected have not had the same privileges as are available to miners who have been made redundant.

The £10 million that has been allocated to NCB (Enterprise) Ltd is a fairly modest amount when compared with the sums that we are discussing tonight. If the board can live within the £800 million target, the amount by which it can do so might go some way towards increasing the money that will be made available to the enterprise scheme to enable communities that are adversely affected to set up industries, a good example of which is Corby. I make that positive suggestion to my hon. Friend, which he will not be able to deal with now, but which I hope he will bear in mind.

We should all be glad if the industry could live within the proposed limits and thereby make funds available to the enterprise scheme.

In 1978-79, £17·6 million was spent in redundancy payments. That figure rose to £202·1 million in 1984.

Mr. Hardy: There were more redundancies last year.

Mr. Howarth: I accept that, but the sums have increased considerably. It is also important to note that the rates have also increased considerably. Many of my constituents look longingly at people in the coal industry who have been able to take voluntary redundancy and who have received large sums and continuing payments. Such facilities have not been made available to people in equally important industries. I hope that those who have been made redundant understand that they have been accorded something that has not been available to any other group of workers. That in itself is a tribute to what the Government have done for the industry. Opposition Members must recognise that the sums available to miners have increased. I hope that they accept that that is not a sign of destruction.

The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) mentioned victimised miners. There are working miners in my constituency who suffered victimisation and continue to suffer victimisation, even in pits which worked throughout the dispute. I hope that he shares my anxiety for those who have received pretty rough treatment from some of those who were not working. It would do his cause no end of good if he associated himself with that sympathy.

11.47 pm

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) should recognise that, although there might have been redundancies and closures under Labour in the 1970's, they were uncomfortable and were like a bad cold which required medication. We now have amputation and provision for redundancy, however generous, can be described as an anaesthetic. When that anaesthetic wears off, the amputation remains. Our anxiety about extensive closures and redundancies concerns their crippling effect on our communities.

There is and must be a continuing obligation. In the 1950s, the 1960s and possibly before, those of us who felt that there should be economic diversification in the coalfields found obstacles because the NCB, which then paid much lower wages than it did after the 1972 and 1974 strikes, was fearful of losing manpower. The nation was therefore protected at the cost of inadequate diversification in the coalfields. That is why, when pits in our constituencies close today, there is little other work for our young people. It is right to treat their fathers, elder brothers and uncles decently, because they will never work again and we must be worried about the waste of men in their forties or early fifties, but our main concern is about the boys at school today. They will lack jobs and purchasing power. The lack of development of other industries and the creation of economic capacity will threaten the prospects of their sisters and brothers who would not work in the pits.

We shall not oppose the Bill, but I hope that the Minister has detected the latent optimism in the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). I share that optimism, despite my fears. The Minister will be optimistic about the prospects for the industry — about the 12·5 million tonnes capacity for Selby and the 12·5 million tonnes capacity from investment in and

reorganisation of existing collieries which will allow the board to produce coal more cheaply than it can from existing pits which are limited by their age.

If Selby and Belvoir go ahead and existing collieries are reorganised, coal will become much more competitive. If the Government pursue an intelligent energy policy they will seek to draw back into the coal market the 1,000 or more firms which could return to it. If that happened there could be a shortage of coal by the 1990s, despite the astonishing stocks which were built up before the dispute.

Some Government Members are prepared to go to the world market to buy coal at its cheapest, but international coal prices might not always be lower and Britain might not always have the oil revenues to enable us to buy abroad. National strategic interest requires us to match our coal demand with home produced supplies.

I hope that the Minister will resist pressure from hon. Members such as the hon. Members for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) and for Cannock and Burntwood to ensure that we have the capacity to stand firm, meet our needs and save our overseas expenditure when the oil and gas have gone.

The lead time for the development of new power stations is long. I hope that the Government are not foolish enough to go along the PWR course, against which they have been warned, but we must be careful not to require the Minister to curtail support for the NCB if Government Members persist.

The basic reason for the large stocks of coal before the dispute was as much to do with Government economic policy in discouraging industrial activity and creating 4 million unemployed as through any fault of the NCB. Coal is a basic industry. If the economic infrastructure does not allow that industry to be profitable, it will feel the cold first and be relieved of it last.

I am delighted that the Government have recognised that the coal industry is important and must continue. I trust that the Government will ensure that the capacity of the industry is sufficient to serve the nation's needs when our oil and gas resources are diminished , and to provide the coal required for the basic chemical feedstock for industry.

Closing a steel works such as that at Corby to develop a funfair might be right in the short term, but we have to create wealth as well as spend it. If we are to retain a national capacity to create wealth, we have to retain a national coal industry of considerable size, although the hon. Member for Darlington, may not feel that to be a particularly reasonable proposition.

I am relieved that we have been discussing the Bill in recent weeks, because it has given many of my hon. Friends and I an opportunity to make public comment on matters that are exceedingly serious. Recent experience has probably given some reason for the Minister to accept that the views that we expounded in 1983 and the first weeks of 1984 were probably wiser than they were seen to be at the time. It is a pity that the 1984-85 coal dispute occurred and that that enormous cost was incurred—it could have been avoided. The experience since that strike ended has demonstrated the point that several hon. Members on both sides of the House have made in recent weeks, that the NCB's conduct since the strike has been unwise, there was an absence of magnanimity when it would have been entirely profitable, and there was a deceit, which was utterly contemptible, with regard to the agreement that was made with my association last autumn.

The Minister is aware of that, as are some other Conservative Members. In Committee, one of them described the coal board's behaviour as ham-handed and stupid. So it has been. It may have been worse than that. Conservative Members realise that last autumn my association was persuaded not to go into dispute with the board although it had secured an enormous majority for that purpose. The board came along and made an agreement that the Prime Minister described as sacrosanct. We have had some embroidery of the word, of its meanings and limitations, in the past few weeks. Repeatedly, Ministers, including the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, in all good faith at the Dispatch Box, gave absolute and categoric assurances that that agreement stood. As soon as the National Union of Mineworkers' dispute appeared to end, the NCB decided, in my view deliberately, that it could ride a coach and horses through that agreement. That is no way for a public or even a private sector company to behave, to breach such agreements.

There have been further costs in the industry as a consequence of the industrial action taken by NACODS. It reached the view, as a result of a democratic exercise, that it could no longer trust the NCB, and was being treated with contempt. It believed that the agreement into which it had entered in all good faith and which I believe the Government had accepted with an element of integrity was treated with contempt by Hobart house.

The Minister may know as much as I do at this stage. I hope that the comments that have been made today will lead to a restoration of stability in the industry. I do not know whether that will happen. Much will depend on what happens next week. I do not know whether the Bill will come back to the House as their Lordships might not feel disposed to amend it. I hope that the Minister will use all the influence that he can bring to bear to ensure that when the NCB and the unions meet next week, the modified procedure will be established.

I know that the NCB does not particularly like that procedure. One reason was touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson). As many of my hon. Friends who spent many years in the industry will know, miners have said repeatedly that sometimes in the past the NCB deliberately underinvested or misinvested to secure the failure and therefore the closure of a colliery that it wanted to get rid of. When they were in the pit, my hon. Friends knew a lot about the industry, and could have drawn attention to misinvestment or erroneous management by the NCB. The Minister may have formed the view over the past year or two that the coal board has its imperfections. It may be that there is some value for the community in the unions within the industry having that early warning capacity which is built into the agreement which the Prime Minister said was sacrosanct. I trust that that procedure will be rapidly established and that the NCB will be kept to the promise which it repeatedly made. Ministers have repeatedly referred to that procedure in the House and outside, but it now seems that by trickery and deceit the NCB is trying to find ways around the commitments which Ministers have properly and honourably made.

Our concern is that a coal industry must be retained. There are prospects for that industry of real size and importance, and we should not make short-term calculations which will bring long-term disadvantage.

[Mr. Hardy]

At the same time, the fears that I and my hon. Friends have expressed about our communities are very real. Some Conservative Members sometimes imagine that the threat is merely to a few collieries in the peripheral coalfields. There is often talk about retaining capacity in the central area. The area of my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), who made an important speech, is part of the central Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire area. So is my own constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield. I understand that later this week the south Yorkshire area will be told its fate.

If there are pit closures in my area, it will be at astonishing cost, because unemployment rates in parts of my constituency where such closures are possible are as high as anywhere in Britain, and whose closures could mean unemployment rates that are higher than in parts of Northern Ireland. If any Conservative Member thinks that the trouble in Northern Ireland is entirely religious in its basis, and that it has nothing to do with the appalling and obscene levels of unemployment there, he is guilty of extremely shallow and superficial consideration. Therefore, the need to invest in our areas to create the economic opportunity that is essential if we are to give hope to our young people is overridingly important.

I have looked at some of the documents provided by the coalfield campaign. This is a serious attempt to have a mature and sensible debate in order to escure economic steps that will give sustenance and succour to our areas. One of the studies carried out by Mr. John Winterton of Bradford university—I do not think he is any relation of Conservative Members of the same name—appears to recognise that 80 pits could be closed and 180,000 jobs lost within two or three years.

I calculate that if some people in the NCB have their way — those responsible for stimulating rumours to engender a new fear in the coalfield in recent weeks— my own area could see 5,000 coal jobs go within two or three years. One of the local newspapers has tried to telephone me because it cannot believe those figures, but I gather that it has looked at the possible pit closures in the locality and worked out that the total job losses would be slightly less than 5,000.

The Minister and my hon. Friends who represent mining communities are aware that redundancies do not occur only at collieries that are closed, because automation and change is taking place, and job contraction, even at successful collieries, is proceeding apace. I cannot set foot out of my home without encountering people in Wath upon Dearne where I live who are accepting redundancy.

On Saturday afternoon I got out of my car in the centre of Wath and the first man to whom I spoke and whom I have known all my life said that he had accepted redundancy and was leaving the following week. Another man for whom I have enormous respect, who is the sort of man that Conservative Members, who were slamming the mining communities last year, would not recognise as a miner, who is a devout member of the same church as me and who has run our scouts since he left the airborne forces after the war has also accepted redundancy. Neither of them are at pits or coal board establishments, which face imminent closure. Thousands of men have accepted redundancy or early retirement since the end of the strike.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens: I do not blame them.

Mr. Hardy: Nor do I. If a man has spent 40 years or more underground, he deserves the generous treatment that the constituents of Conservative Members may question or criticise. We do not object to our constituents who have worked for 40 years being treated decently at the end of their labours, but we are worried about our communities. We are not prepared to see our communities destroyed, young people who should be entering employment with verve and hope without any, or villages unable to offer even one young person an ordinary job. In Dalton Brook there is not a boy, girl or scarcely a teenager in normal employment—I checked recently.

If Conservative Members think that our society can survive that sort of experience for long, they are idiots. They may not think that it matters because we are in the Labour part of the country. They may think that they can maintain power by dominating the political representations of England, or the southern two thirds of England, but this island is far too small to suffer that for long. The Conservative party cannot run Britain without recognising that sooner or later it must command respect in Scotland, Wales, Yorkshire, Northumberland, Durham and the other areas which in the past have created the great wealth that the southern areas have cheerfully spent.

It is time that the Government understood that our communities will not allow their young people to face an utter and complete blight. I cannot accept that my constituents should be in that position, nor can hundreds of my hon. Friends. The Government must act with wisdom now. The Bill suggests that there is the possibility of wisdom. I deeply resent the fact that the modest display of wisdom in the Bill is being criticised and carped at by Conservative Members, who may be articulate, but who have not displayed a scrap of wisdom, which the country is entitled to expect from its Parliament. I hope that the Minister will reject his hon. Friends' criticisms, and that he will ensure that the coal industry is sustained. I hope that he believes that the coal industry, is, has been, and must continue to be important in providing energy for the United Kingdom. For that reason the Bill is necessary.

It is necessary to provide adequate funds for the NCB to serve a proper energy policy and—no hon. Member should have to say this in the House now — for the industry and its chairman to recognise that the sooner we return to decent relationships in the industry and the sooner that the legacy of deceit and dishonesty, and the contempt for sacrosanct agreements of recent weeks is put behind us, the better.

If the chairman or deputy chairman of the NCB is not prepared to recognise that their conduct in recent weeks has been contemptible, I suggest that it is time that the Prime Minister was told very clearly by the responsible Ministers that her choice, Mr. MacGregor, has cost Britain billions of pounds and brought an industry which has an important future into a disorder that should not have been experienced. The sooner those two gentlemen change their ways, the better. If they are not prepared to change their ways, the sooner they go the better it will be for Britain and our coalfields.

12.11 am

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I do not wish to detain the House any longer than is necessary, because it knows my commitment to the coal industry over the past two years.

I should like to reinforce some of the comments made by Opposition Members about the low morale in the coal industry today. It is lower than it has ever been in the past 40 years. I know that the Minister has taken a personal interest in going round the coalfields, and trying to reassure the miners in those coalfields that they have a viable and long-term future in the industry.

I should like to take issue with my hon. Friends who think that a deficit grant to the coal industry is a subsidy to those who work in the industry. The coal industry, like the agricultural industry, is given subsidies and deficit grants for the benefit of the customers and consumers of its products. We should not forget that.

I welcomed the Minister's commitment in Committee to NCB (Enterprise) Ltd., and I was delighted that the clause asking for £50 million was withdrawn, because the Minister said that, whatever was required to make new jobs available for the areas where pits were to be closed — whether it was £15 million, £50 million or £100 million—the money would be available if the case was made out. If, as the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) said, the chief executive of his district council has been in touch with the NCB with regard to the setting up of new enterprises and has had no reply, I agree that that delay should be ended at once.

12.12 am

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The hon. Members for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) and for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) talked about the money side of the Bill. The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood mentioned redundancies and the sheer cost of the Bill. I am pleased that they did not have to live through the 1940s and the 1960s in the coal industry, when many difficult problems arose. Had they lived then, they would have known that, in the 1940s, the coal industry suffered hundreds of losses, and willingly so, because the men in the industry, believing in nationalisation, which had been championed for many years by Members of this House, realised that they had to slim down the industry to make it viable after the owners had wrecked it.

When there was a market for coal, and when coal could have commanded any price in the market, the miners sold their product well below the market price because they were asked by Parliament to do so for the benefit of the country. Therefore, it is only justice that the money that should have been theirs at that time should now be returned by the grants to the industry. Had they been able to sell coal in the market in the way that Conservatives always like to advocate, the money from those sales could have been invested, and there would now be no need to provide money for the industry.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) referred to the importing of coal, he noted that the Minister was shaking his head. If the Minister shook his head about the importing of coal, that is a step forward. if the Minister knows that coal imports are not to be increased, he must also know what the ultimate size of the industry will be. The Bill gives every indication of a massive rundown of the industry. As the new capacity in Selby and Belvoir comes on stream, there will also be the advent of MINOS. This system has been brought to perfection in various coalfields and will result in completely automated pits. The restructuring of the coalfields in the Barnsley area will result in a 21 per cent. increase in output and a 20 per cent. reduction in manpower. It means that we shall be facing not a manpower loss of 20,000 but the closure of 80 pits, and that 70,000 or 80,000 men will be made redundant.

The recent strike was all about the contraction of the industry and the resulting fight for jobs and the preservation of coalmining communities. About 54 local authorities, all with a common interest, have now got together. They represent 16 million men, women and children, 1·16 million unemployed and 254,000 businesses. That is the size of the coalfield community campaign. They are looking at ways and means not only to save the industry but to bring alternative employment to those areas. By creating 3,000 jobs, Barnsley took a step backwards. The recent review showed that the closure of the Darfield main colliery and the restructuring of the coalfields in the Barnsley area would mean the loss of exactly the 3,000 jobs which it had taken Barnsley five years to create.

The story does not end there. It is only the beginning of the closure programme. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) referred to a fuel policy. I wish that we had the co-ordinated fuel policy for which we have asked for many years. That is the only sensible way in which to deal with the use of energy. We were close to having such a policy when the British National Oil Corporation and British Gas belonged to the nation. The Government have decided that they will no longer belong to the nation. That is a backward step in the effort to create a co-ordinated energy policy. Only with such a policy will the energy resources of this country be used sensibly. Instead, we shall be producing as much oil and gas as we can as fast as we can, not only for home consumption but for sale overseas. This means, that unless new oil and gas fields are discovered our oil and gas reserves will have been depleted by the year 2010.

The closure of 80 collieries means that production will be limited to about 100 million tonnes and will lead to a crazy position. In that period coal should be at a premium, with the gas and the oil running out, and coal should be coming back into its own again. However, we shall no longer have an industry if the Government continue with their intention to decimate the coal industry.

Not long ago, I asked the gas board what it would take to replace the natural gas that customers are now using. It said that 100 million tonnes of coal would be needed, but we shall be producing only that amount. Therefore, where will the coal for industry, for chemicals, for liquefaction and the power stations come from? The energy can come only if we are to import coal on a vast scale, or if the Government have decided on a nuclear energy policy, with gas needs supplied from the 100 million tonnes of British coal and foreign imports.

It is time for a debate on our energy policy, and it is time that the Government came clean about what they are thinking will provide the energy resources for the future. If we run the coal industry down in the planned way, and if gas and oil are to be run independently, we shall leave a legacy for the next generation for which they will not thank us, unless we go flat out on a nuclear energy policy.

My feelings about the chairman of the NCB and his attitude are well known. I have great respect for him as a manager, but that is all. I have no respect for the way that he treated the steel industry, and even less for the way that he is treating the coal industry. When he was chairman of the steel industry, I went to see him about the process of making steel from powdered steel, a process that was

[Mr. Allen McKay]

taking place in a steelworks in my constituency, which Ian MacGregor decided to close. He said that he was closing it because he could make steel more cheaply than by the powdered steel process, which was probably true at that time.

Lo and behold, our competitors from Japan and Europe are now making steel through the powdered steel process, which MacGregor decided was no good for Britain. It looks as though the liquefaction plan in the coal industry, and the fluidised bed experiments are in jeopardy if MacGregor brings to the coal industry the attitude that he had in the steel industry.

The 1939 war started from the Versailles agreement. The next war in the coal industry may start from the treatment of the dismissed miners. I attended two sittings of the Select Committee on Employment when it interviewed the chairman of the NCB in the afternoon and Arthur Scargill in the morning. There was a vast difference in the conciliatory approach to the problems of the NUM —the Minister shakes his head, but I was there for the whole day—and that of the NCB.

The attitude of the chairman of the NCB was belligerent —so much so that the attitude of the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst), who is no friend of the unions and certainly not a member of the NUM, changed as he questioned the chairman; the Minister can ask his hon. Friend about that. The chairman said deliberately that, as far as he was concerned, the dismissed miners would remain dismissed. His attitude was, "I am the chairman." His distaste for this place, his distaste for politicians, his distaste for being questioned was there to be seen, and he made no effort to hide that distaste.

I spent a period working at Hobart house, and I could not get away fast enough to go back into the coalfields. I do not think that I would like to work there now under the present chairman. Having said what I have about him, I do not suppose that I would get a chance anyway. After observing that attitude, I can understand why the late Geoff Kirk and Ned Smith and others decided to leave.

I want to turn next to the union officials at collieries who, following the central directive, have been sent underground, on which I have views for and against. After 20 years of encouragement by management not to go underground, but to be at their place on the surface to help the manager to quell disputes before they started, it was decided that they should go underground. It was the wrong move at the wrong time. Students who attended day release courses have now been told that day release will finish. That is a wrong move at the wrong time. Members of local authorities who have hitherto been allowed time off to attend council meetings or to change shifts to attend council meetings can no longer change shifts or have time off.

I wish to draw to the Minister's attention the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, and I ask him to discuss this with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. The Act is clear:

"The right, available to a relevant employee, is a right to claim time off work for specified public duties. There is no statutory right to pay during absence (though there may be a contractual right) . . . The employer does not comply with his statutory obligation to allow time off merely by allowing the employee to rearrange his duties so that the employee can make up for lost time elsewhere . . . They include the duties of a lay magistrate, a local councillor, a member of a tribunal, a member of various National Health Service bodies, a school governor or manager"

and members of the health authorities, as they used to be.

"An aggrieved employee may make a complaint to an industrial tribunal that his employer has refused to allow him time off . . . It may also award compensation for any loss suffered by the employee or any insult or injury occasioned to him by reason of the employer's default".

I suggest that the chairman of the coal board is wrong in the central directive to say that councillors should no longer have time off.

From the chairman's attitude, it appears that conciliation and consultation will no longer exist within the ambit of the National Coal Board. He seems to be taking the view that that will be replaced by industrial relations tribunals, and that he will have nothing to do with it.

It appears that we are going to rely on imported coal or all-out nuclear power unless the Minister can alleviate those fears by what he has to say in winding up. Those fears would be alleviated if we could be told what is the policy of Government towards the coal board, what is their energy policy now and for the future, what the number of pits is to be and what is to be the output. Unless the Government intend that the economy will remain as stagnant as it now is, where will the extra coal come from when it is needed? Will the Minister also meet the communities campaign people to ascertain how investment will be made in the areas to meet the further closures that have to take place?

12.30 am

Mr. Dickens: I shall not detain the House long as I have the Adjournment debate and I am anxious to get home. I have listened patiently to the debate, which has been a good debate. Almost every Opposition Member has kicked Ian MacGregor and the Government around the Chamber, but there has been no mention of our Mr. Scargill.

I was one of the few Conservative Members who attended the coalfield community campaign meeting. I want to tell Opposition Members a few home truths. represent an area dominated by the textile industry. In many villages and towns the textile mills were the sole employer. Villages built up around the mills and the towns grew from that, as did the outworkers to the mill and those who supplied it. Therefore when a mill closed it was equally as devasting as a pit closure. However, its workers did not get massive redundancy handouts; they did not have the guarantee of a certain job, even if at slightly reduced rates. The mills closed. I know that Opposition Members may say that that is different because the workers could do something else in the mill, but they could not because the mills had been felled to the ground.

I could not listen to Opposition Members kicking the NCB and the Government around the Chamber without their taking any of the blame. I mention the Luddites because Opposition Members said that soldiers had been at the pitheads. Of course, exactly the same happened at the mills, where the soldiers got the looms into the mills when they wanted mechanical means of producing cloth. It is almost a mirror image.

The mill workers did not receive the handouts that have been offered to the miners. I make no complaints because Opposition Members have always attended such debates, fighting their corner for their constituencies. That is right.

However, they must remember that the very people in my constituency who were put out of work with no handouts have mushroomed into small businesses that are growing and booming; they are paying taxes that are going towards the redundancy payments for miners and the money that we shall nod through this evening to support the miners. We make no complaint, but we feel rather sore when Opposition Members blame the Government for falling order books.

We cannot produce coal at a price that no one wishes to pay. It is futile to produce coal on that basis. Ian MacGregor was moved into the steel industry, but we must remember that he was No. 2 to Edwardes at British Leyland, which is now in good shape. There would have been no steel industry in Britain if MacGregor had not reduced the manning levels. We had to vote £75 million through this Chamber to buy off some of the workers with attractive redundancy payments. We had to buy a solution. The world was not impressed by the fact that the Japanese used only three men to produce a tonne of steel while we used seven men.

I ordered 5,000 tonnes of steel from BSC and it could not meet the price. I could not win overseas orders on that price and had to go overseas for my steel. If we had a steel industry that could not compete—not sharpen its pencils for competition—it would fail and there would be no steel industry. The Government are wholly committed to the coal industry, but the recent terrible strike was inflicted by the leader of the NUM. Hon. Members shouted at me during Prime Minister's Question Time when I said that he was a Marxist surrounded by Communists. Opposition Members went for me, but I was not far off the mark. They cannot just put the blame on the Government.

Let me give an example of how things slip up. In Northern Ireland they are putting a power station at a lignite mine in County Antrim. If it had not been for the coal strike, Kilroot power station might have converted from oil to coal. It has been delayed, and I hope that in the fullness of time it will be a coal-powered station. As a party we are committed to coal, but we want to see fair play.

Do not let us have tears about the Government and about the National Coal Board. Opposition Members should keep their tears for Arthur Scargill and the way he led them up the garden path. They should fight the corner for their constituencies, but they should fight fairly.

12.36 am

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) is perhaps too honest for his own health or for his own party's good. He was trying to suggest that it is an invigorating and good experience for whole communities to be scrapped and put in the dole queue. If he will not take it from me, I wish he had had a rear view mirror when he was making his speech because he would have been able to see the expression on the face of his hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) who has a legitimate concern. Some of us wish that he had expressed that concern about the future of the people working in the coal industry during the past 12 months instead of waiting until now to recognise the mayhem caused in the industry by the chairman of the National Coal Board.

Of course the Bill must have a Third Reading. The industry needs the money. I suppose this is part of the payoff for what the Chancellor of the Exchequer saw fit to describe as a good investment. Many of us feel that the money might have been better invested if the Government had reached a settlement a very long time ago. Perhaps not quite as much money would have been required if the Government had not been so obsessed with the need to obtain the kind of victory that they think they have achieved. We should consider the double-edged effort that that will turn out to be.

Several of my hon. Friends have referred to the broader needs of the coalfield communities. I join them in paying tribute to the local authorities who are waging such an effective campaign for the need to develop those coalfield communities which are being afflicted by the contraction of the industry afflicted on them by the Government.

My own constituency suffered from the contraction of the coal industry in recent years and I have some experience of how difficult it is to attract new industries and employment into areas which have suffered cutbacks in mining. Apart from the obvious economic difficulties and problems of remoteness, there is the physical problem of finding places to build factories in areas that have been undermined extensively because of the danger of subsidence.

To pick up a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and others, what will happen to the future of Britain's energy industry? What future is there for the coal industry? How will the nation find the sources of energy that it will need in the long-term or, indeed, the medium-term future? Our oil reserves will not last for ever. We shall need to tap our coal reserves. I fear that the massive contraction of the coal industry that the Government have in mind could leave us with severe long-term problems. I should like to see developments in areas such as Musselburgh upon which my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) did so much preparatory work years ago. We shall need our coal reserves in the future. It is a tragedy that developments are not taking place now when they would be easy.

The Bill must have its Third Reading, but it will not have it until I have had an opportunity to express to the Minister how strongly I feel about the conduct of the National Coal Board and its chairman. If Conservative Members and the Minister are becoming fed up listening to Opposition Members complaining about that, I warn them that they will go on hearing about it over and over again until some fairness is shown towards the people who work in the coal industry.

Reconciliation in the industry is being hampered by the fact that we are dealing with an elderly man who suffers from paranoia. If there were any doubt about that we had only to listen to Mr. MacGregor giving evidence to the Select Committee on Employment two weeks ago when he said that he felt that it was his duty to do some of the things that he had been doing because he felt that he was facing an insurrection. It did not seem like an insurrection from where I was sitting or to the coal mining communities in East Lothian. It looked like the Dunkirk spirit where families and communities were trying to work together to protect their jobs and the jobs of people about whom they cared in similar communities elsewhere. However, other people evidently saw the matter differently.

We are now seeing stupid, vindictive repression by the coal board management in various areas of the country, and in particular in Scotland. We have seen petty vindictiveness about concessionary coal, the withholding

[Mr. John Home Robertson]

of holiday pay, taxation and other such matters. Above all, there is the unwarranted number of dismissals, especially in Scotland.

The Minister is aware, because I have written to him, the Prime Minister, the chairman of the coal board and almost everyone else who is supposed to be responsible, that 17 men in my constituency have been sacked for no good reason during the dispute. That problem will not go away. Those men cannot be written off. They are people. They have families, neighbours and communities that care about them. It is intolerable that they should continue to suffer from what any right-thinking person must recognise as being a gross and unreasonable injustice.

Those Opposition Members who are aware of such problems will go on about them until some fairness is shown to those people. It is about time that the Minister, who is supposed to be responsible for coal, addresses himself to that problem because there will be no reconciliation in the industry until something is done for people like the 17 men in my constituency.

12.43 am

Mr. David Hunt: This has been a good debate characterised by the sincerity and depth of experience of all Members who have contributed to it.

I hope that everyone shares the regret that all right-thinking Members should feel that it is necessary to make further provision for deficit grant. It is not healthy for the Government to have to support the coal industry in the way that they have had to do in recent years.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), I do not believe that dependence upon state aid is in the best interests of those who work in the industry. Many of those who care about our great coal industry have been deeply saddened by the events of the past year, because without the damage caused by the strike the industry would have made considerable progress towards the healthy future that would have been in the interests of the miners and the nation. The sad fact is that last year was not a year of progress, as it could so well have been, but a year of lost opportunities and lost coal faces. Seventy-three faces were lost during the dispute—48 working faces, 24 salvage faces and one development face. Writing off those faces will cost the NCB many millions of pounds. Recovering faces is proving to be an expensive business.

The scale of the losses is difficult to comprehend—£2·2 billion is a massive sum. How much better could it have been spent but for the needless, futile strike? The Opposition must stop trying to rewrite the history of the dispute. Surely the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) recognises the damage that was done by Arthur Scargill. The Opposition's refusal to recognise that fact was responsible for sparking my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) into action. I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that the Kilroot conversion to coal has now been announced. He is right to recognise that coal will have a great future in this industry if it faces up to present realities.

The future is promising, provided that all those in the industry work together in a spirit of reconciliation, putting the divisions of the past behind them. We have enormous resources of coal that could be mined economically and efficiently. We have a skilled and able work force. We have the benefit of advanced technology. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) keeps reminding us, there is so much going for the coal industry. The opportunities are there to be grasped.

The message from this debate must be that, to reap the benefits, we must produce coal at the right price. That means tackling the problems of the high-cost pits and excess capacity, improving productivity and cutting costs. That policy lies within a clear, coherent energy strategy. I say to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) that the fundamental objective of this country's energy policy is to ensure that the nation has adequate and secure supplies of energy at the lowest possible cost. We are lucky to have four options available—coal, oil, gas and nuclear fuel. It must be the effort of every Government to keep each of those options active and developing, maximising the contribution to the economy of the energy sector as a whole.

The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) explained the Opposition's position on the Bill and stressed the urgency of the NCB's financial position. The latter point has been echoed in all the speeches. The hon. Gentleman accused me in serious terms of not responding to various questions that he had raised, and proceeded to criticise the answers that I had given. There is a crucial paradox in that. It is the solution to the problem that he raises. The fact is that the hon. Gentleman does not like the replies that he has received.

Mr. Eadie: The hon. Gentleman did not give any.

Mr. Hunt: How then could the hon. Gentleman criticise my replies?

On Second Reading, I promised to bring to the NCB's attention individual cases of dismissals about which hon. Members provided details. Several hon. Members subsequently wrote to me, and I immediately forwarded copies of their letters to the NCB chairman with a request that the cases be looked into and a reply sent to them direct. I know, and I have checked again today, that those letters are all receiving careful consideration. The board will write in detail to all the hon. Members concerned.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) was particularly concerned that no appeal had been heard in the case of the five men dismissed from the Phurnacite plant at Abercwmboi who would soon run out of time to apply to an industrial tribunal. I made urgent investigations and was told that the internal inquiry procedure was completed on 24 May when the men's dismissals were confirmed. This was in time to enable those of the men who wished to do so to apply to an industrial tribunal.

I should tell the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) that the decision to dismiss a man is never taken lightly. There is no question of victimisation or vindictiveness in the board's actions. The proper course for anyone who believes that he has been unfairly dismissed is to take his case to an industrial tribunal. That is true of any industry. I understand that more than 450 dismissed miners have already taken such action.

Mr. Eadie: The Minister says that we do not like the answers he gives, but he has given no answers. I hope that he will read the evidence given by the chairman of the National Coal Board to the Select Committee on Employment. When he talks about industrial tribunals, he is deceiving the House, because the chairman of the NCB made it clear to the Select Committee that not only will

he not re-engage miners who are successful at the industrial tribunals, but that he has absolute contempt for such tribunals.

Mr. Hunt: I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not believe that I am trying to deceive the House. I was not present at the proceedings of the Select Committee, and I understand that the transcript of that evidence has not yet been published, but, as I understand the position, it was stated that, of the 944 men dismissed by the board during the strike, at that time just under 450 had appealed to industrial tribunals; nine cases had been heard; seven miners were held to have been fairly dismissed; one was held to have been unfairly dismissed with no recommendations for re-employment; and one was held to have been unfairly dismissed who has since been re-employed by the board following that recommendation.

The hon. Member for Midlothian asked about the operation of conciliation machinery under the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946. There is no question of the board failing to meet its obligations under the Act. It is unwilling to set up procedures to conciliate where a man alleges wrongful dismissal arising from incidents at his work place to be used in the different circumstances of strike-related dismissals for which the board believes they are inappropriate. The system of industrial tribunals ensures that miners who wish to appeal in those circumstances will be treated in exactly the same way as, and will have the same rights as employees in any other industry.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House asked about the enterprise company. In the early hours of the morning, I do not wish to respond in detail to the specific points made, because I wish to look into some of them further.

The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) asked specific questions about some pits. With regard to his alarmist comments about the number of redundancies, for which there is no clear foundation, and to similar comments from the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone, it is still too soon for the NCB to assess with precision how fast production can be restored and the markets re-won. Until that calculation can be made, no final decisions can be made on future capacity.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the Minister telling the House that the pits which I named will not close?

Mr. Hunt: Of course not, because the hon. Gentleman knows the position of those pits. He knows that a decision has been made on Ackton Hall, Glasshoughton and Savile pits. He speculated about the future of other pits, but it is not for me to respond about them. That is a matter for the management of the coal board, and its right to manage was clearly established during the dispute.

However, there are real anxieties about the effect of closures on communities, which is why the Government place so much emphasis on the enterprise company. I shall investigate carefully the comments of the hon. Member for Ashfield and some other comments. I keep in close touch with the executive director of the enterpise company, Mr. Hewitt—indeed, I spoke to him today—and I can say that the company has made an encouraging start in creating alternative employment in coal mining areas. It has already established links with enterprise companies throughout the British coalfield.

Loans totalling nearly £500,000 have already been approved, and that money will initially create 200 to 300 new jobs, and up to 400 or 500 later. The company is actively considering requests for funds in excess of £3 million, with the potential to generate more than 1,000 new jobs. As my hon. Friends the Members for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) and for Sherwood said, I have stressed to the House on every possible occasion that further funds will be available as necessary.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) spoke of the need for a better atmosphere. I share his welcome for the spirit of reconciliation in the pits, although I must disagree with his analysis of present circumstances. There were always bound to be exposed nerve ends in the aftermath of a dispute as tragic and bitter as the recent one. It was a strike that should never have been, and if there had been a ballot at the start it would never had taken place.

The hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) is rightly proud of the board's operations under the North sea. I was deeply impressed by what I found at Ellington —the world's largest undersea coal mining operation— and was pleased to hear soon after my visit of further substantial investment at that pit. The hon. Gentleman made several other interesting observations which I was fascinated to hear.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report. He will know that it recognised that the two central problems of the industry are overcapacity and the tail of high-cost pits. The Government and the board agree with that analysis. We are committed to tackling these problems as quickly as possible and to returning the industry to viability.

I am aware that pit closures and redundancies are uppermost in some hon, Member's minds. The board is still assessing the damage done by the strike. The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) mentioned a forthcoming meeting in south Yorkshire. There are still some meetings to come. I hope that the assessment period will be over as quickly as possible. The meetings are setting out the options for the future. Tragically, many faces have been lost and there is no longer a prospect of a viable future at some pits, but the board has given the firm assurance that no pit will close until it has been through the proper colliery review procedure.

I hope that the hon. Member for Wenworth will understand if I do not go into detail about what he said about the NACODS dispute, except to say that I hope that it will end as soon as possible. At pits that close, generous redundancy terms are available to those who wish to leave the industry and there is a job for those who wish to stay.

Because of the deficit grant situation, the setting of the figures for the Bill could not await the outcome of the review. I hope that hon. Members understand that. I confirm to my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood that we have given the board the firm objective of breaking even without deficit grant by 1987-88 and we expect it to meet that objective. There has been and will continue to be substantial investment in new faces, new plant and new machinery that will provide lasting jobs.

Work on sinking the shaft at Asfordby will begin soon, and I recently visited Selby and was greatly impressed by what I saw. The Government have invested more than £4 billion in the coal industry. That is a massive vote of confidence in its future, but investment will in future depend on tackling the problems of the past. The hon. Member for Wansbeck acknowledged that, albeit in a different context.

[Mr. Hunt]

The hon. Member for Wentworth said that, before the strike we expected 1,000 firms to convert to coal. We have continued the support for such conversion through the coal firing scheme, which has been kept open beyond the previous deadline at the end of last year. The industrial market is a clear growth area for coal and it is vital that the industry should take the opportunity to demonstrate that it is a competitive and reliable supplier.

It is also important that the coal supplied to the electricity industry is competitively priced, since the cost of coal represents half the cost of electricity generation. The competitiveness of our coal is vital to the industrial electricity users who face fierce competition from overseas.

I tell the hon. Members for Ashfield and for Wentworth, who talk about imports and exports, that when the Conservatives won the election in 1979 the United Kingdom was a net importer of 2 million tonnes of coal. By 1983 it had become a net exporter of 2 million tonnes. The strike has destroyed that and last year's imports were twice those of 1973. I must tell the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone that we hope to increase our share of the European market for coal if the NCB becomes more competitive in relation to supplies from other countries.

Some Opposition Members have said that insufficient coal will be produced in Britain to meet our needs. Those fears are completely unfounded. With the new high volume pits such as Selby and Asfordby, and with the substantial investment in existing pits, we shall have ample coal, not only for our own needs, but, providing that costs can be kept to a minimum, for exports in competition with supplies from all round the world.

As the hon. Member for Midlothian said, this industry of ours has a long and honourable tradition which I admire and respect. But if it is to survive, it must be built on the tradition of looking forward, and not backwards. A great future lies ahead and I hope and expect all those who work in the industry to take advantage of the opportunity which the Bill offers to secure a firm and prosperous future. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Nurses' Pay

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

1.1 am

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I am sorry that the clock has just turned one o'clock as we begin to debate the important nurses' pay issue. I have no doubt that the *Official Report* will be well read.

The whole question of nurses' pay has been sadly neglected over many years under successive Governments. The good will and decency of the nurses and the professions allied to medicine, such as physiotherapists and radiographers, has been abused for too long. We are debating the livelihood of a group of the most respected, dedicated and skilled staff who do not take strike action. Years ago, people were pleased to describe nursing as a "calling" for special pople who put the dedication of patient care in front of financial reward.

Let me be quite blunt and record that that is a most accurate description of the nursing profession even today. However, this is a profession which is admired and respected and we have a duty to ensure that its members can afford their rent, clothing and a few luxuries. Can there be a more deserving group within society entitled to be able to afford a holiday each year?

Periodic inquiries into nurses' pay have proved a failure. An example is that by Lord Halsbury in 1974 which led to large pay increases for nurses, only to be followed by a period of several years when the value of that increase was eroded.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten): The Halsbury award was eroded by the end of the Labour Government in 1979.

Mr. Dickens: I accept that. I did not intend to score a political point, but that point was well worth making.

We desperately required a sound system, and I am delighted to applaud my own Government for their initiative. Full marks go to this Government for establishing a pay review body in 1983 for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine. This system will create better arrangements for settling the pay of these staff within the NHS. Being independent, the pay review body is free to recommend levels of pay that it believes to be appropriate in all the circumstances.

My research tells me that NHS funding has risen by over 20 per cent. since we took office, enabling nurses' pay rates to rise faster than prices, working hours to be cut from 40 to 37½ per week without loss of pay, and an extra 57,000 whole-time nursing equivalents to be employed in Great Britain.

Returning to the review body, the Government are on record as stating that they will stand by their commitments to implement the review body's recommendations—this is where I part company from the Government—unless there are clear and compelling reasons for not doing so. That is the Government's safety valve.

But since the Government themselves always submit evidence to review bodies, on economic and financial considerations as well as such matters as the recruitment and retention of staff groups concerned, it is rather like one

group of witnesses at a trial stating that there may be clear and compelling reasons for not accepting the costs that the judge awards.

The review body will have taken evidence from all other interested parties, including the staff organisations. We are now waiting, with bated breath, for the review body recommendations and also to know whether the Government, having given their own evidence, now propose to act as judge—I really hope not. I have great confidence in the Prime Minister, as well as the Ministers and civil servants in the Department of Health and Social Security, and believe that that will not be the case.

Of course, it is fully appreciated that there is no such thing as Treasury money, only money raised from taxpayers—including nurses themselves. In the current financial year, a cash increase of 5·5 per cent. representing £500 million, has been made available in England, and there is a similar proportion for Scotland and Wales. Regional health authorities will also have available the extra resources produced by local cost improvement programmes. From that vast pool of money—and, I hope, a bit of central money—the NHS must strike the correct balance between all competing demands on those resources. That will need to include the pay of its staff and the development of patient services. In any public body or private company, there is always a direct relationship between pay, capital equipment, expenditure and the number of people employed.

However, as the pay settlement to cover the period from 23 August 1982 to 1 April 1984 of 12·3 per cent. was agreed between parties on the understanding of the proposed setting up of the pay review body, it is most important, in my view, to ensure that we have a contented, sensibly paid nursing staff who will feel motivated to continue their great patient care tradition.

I do hope that, in replying to the debate, the Minister will further enhance his own very high standing in the country in general, and within the NHS in particular, by clearly demonstrating once more to the nurses, the professions allied to medicine, and indeed to the population of the United Kingdom, that patient care is his no. 1 objective.

1.9 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Patten): My hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) is noted for his robust patriotism and firm common sense. That was admirably displayed during our last debate on the coal industry, when I listened to what he said. We have all been fortunate to hear him speak again on this important issue.

My hon. Friend is also noted for his interest in social issues. We know of his concern for the welfare of children, and tonight he has shown his deep concern for the welfare of those who work in the NHS as nurses and midwives. I thank him for raising the important subject of nurses' pay and for giving me the opportunity to set out the Government's record. However, I am in some difficulty, as I am sure he will appreciate, in that I must at the outset make it clear that I cannot comment in detail on this year's pay claim on behalf on nurses and midwives.

As my hon. Friend knows, we have received the report of the independent review body, and we are still considering its recommendations. I cannot tonight anticipate what our conclusions on that report, or those of the other review bodies will be. However, I hope that my hon. Friend and others will not have to wait long for the reports to be published.

Having said that, it is important to put the nurses' pay claim, and the evidence submitted by all parties to the review body, into context. As my hon. Friend said in his concise and characteristically clear speech, since April 1979, the basic pay rates of nurses have on average risen by 94 per cent. That is 23 per cent. more than the increase in prices over the same period. It is important to put that on the record. In addition, the Government found the necessary money—a substantial sum of around £116 million—to reduce nurses' working hours in 1980-81 from 40 to 37½ a week without any loss of pay, thereby enhancing their working conditions and, I hope, their quality of life. That was equivalent to a further increase of 6·5 per cent. on basic pay.

This Government have a lot to be proud of. We have paid the nurses substantially more than the rate of inflation, and we have substantially reduced their hours. But the number of nursing and midwifery staff has also risen steadily, not just to make up for the reduction in hours. We have actually increased the number of nurses and midwives employed overall, thus ensuring a steady and substantial increase in nursing care.

In England, an estimated 39,500 whole-time equivalents were employed between September 1979 and September 1984. Around 24,000 were additional staff to compensate purely for the much-welcomed reduction in hours. But the remainder—on average about an extra 3,000 staff per year—are providing additional services for patients. My hon. Friend was right to end his speech on that note. Consequently, more better paid nurses, employed during a shorter working week, are providing more care for more patients.

Current estimated average earnings—I stress that these are average earnings—of a staff nurse on the maximum of her scale are £147 a week, and those of a ward sister on the maximum £192 a week. I am not suggesting that the Government have provided everything that nurses want, but I am setting down our not inconsiderable record as a background against which this year's pay claim and review body recommendations, when published, must be judged.

The establishment of the review body is a major step forward in making better arrangements for determining nurses' pay. We established it because we recognised the special position of nursing and midwifery staff in not resorting to industrial action. People of all political parties and none, throughout the country welcome our recoghition of that.

I am happy to repeat our commitment to implement the review body's recommendations, unless there are clear and compelling reasons for not doing so. That was the arrangement made when we set up the review body, and I am glad that my hon. Friend gives us full marks for creating it. I know from my constituency that there has been a uniform welcome for the establishment of the pay review body and for the reduction in the working week.

The new arrangements that we have set up in this financial year for funding the NHS mean that there is a direct relationship between pay and service provision. It was important for my hon. Friend to stress the realities of life in this debate, as he did in the previous debate on the coal industry. Pay and service provision simply cannot be divorced. The NHS has no right to expect to be different

[Mr. John Patten]

from other employers in that respect, whether public or private sector employers. The public purse is not bottomless. There must always be a trade off between pay and services. High pay increases will eat into money for patient care, just as in any industry, and public or private body, they eat into its capacity to do what it sets out to do. That is simple common sense.

The more resources that are devoted to pay, the less will be available for services. That has been a fact for successive Governments of all political colours. Only a fool would seek to deny that truth. It cannot be wished away.

It is particularly important to remember that a 1 per cent. increase in the nurses' pay bill costs approximately £33 million. To meet a 20 per cent. pay claim would cost £650 million a year extra. We must put that message across to the review bodies. In doing so, we are not for one second saying that we do not want to see nurses and midwives paid properly. Surely our record since 1979, with a substantial increase ahead of inflation and the decrease in the working week demonstrates the Government's determination to those ends.

I should make a further point connected to the Halsbury report to which my hon. Friend referred in his wholly non-party political speech. He may have been right to point to my perhaps unnecessarily partisan references to what happened to the Halsbury pay award after 1974. In evidence to the review body, the staff side referred to increases allegedly required to restore pay to the Halsbury levels of 1974. Such an approach to setting pay is obsolete. We cannot return to it for two reasons.

First, huge pay awards such as the Halsbury award, which was 30 per cent. must be a thing of the past, if we are to maintain the low inflation which is necessary to continue the restoration of our economy. Without that restoration, we cannot increase provision in the NHS, as we are doing at this time of economic difficulty and hope to do at a greater level in a time of economic prosperity.

Secondly, any professional group chooses its favourite year for the purposes of comparison. To allow a group in pay bargaining to pick the year most favourable to its case will produce the leapfrogging in pay rises, which in the past contributed to high inflation, ridiculous rises in pay, and the feeding of inflation, characteristic of the 1970s. That led to the economic problems, especially of 1976, 1977 and 1978, and also to the substantial cuts in provision in the NHS which had to be made in real terms. There have never been cuts in provision in the NHS in real terms since this Government came into office in 1979. Year on year, by any measure, there has been an increase in provision in real terms.

My hon. Friend was right in saying that there is no such thing as Treasury money. Of course there is not. There is only money that is raised from taxpayers. Among those taxpayers are nurses, and with them there are midwives.

The crucial determinants of pay must be the need to deal fairly with staff and also to recruit and retain staff of the right quality. I must ask my hon. Friend to await our decisions on the review body's recommendations, which will, I am confident, satisfy him on that score. Recruitment and retention are not a great problem in nursing, although there are improvements which could be made. That is why we pointed, in our evidence to the review body, to the need to reward experience in the clinical grades, and to increase the attraction of remaining in those grades rather than opting for management or teaching—a road down which, sometimes unfortunately, a number of nurses have gone.

In addition, although this is not strictly a pay issue, we are following with great interest the proposals for revised education and training for nurses which are emerging from the statutory bodies and from the Royal College of Nursing. An improved approach to the training of nurses, midwives and health visitors which meets the aspirations of the profession and the needs of the NHS, and is affordable, should further attract qualified entrants to nursing.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will accept that we are as committed to the position of nurses in the NHS as we are to the service as a whole. Our record is one that we can be proud of. The extra cash that we have made available and the increased efficiency that we have sought to achieve have enabled record numbers of patients to be treated. That is a triumph not of the Government since 1979 but of the NHS, and of all who work in it — doctors, ancillary workers, ambulance men, nurses and midwives. It is their labours — supported by the Government's policies and the hard-won taxpayers' money which has gone into the NHS — which have enabled record numbers of patients to be treated year after year in the life of this Government. My hon. Friend referred to that in the closing moments of his speech, as I do in mine.

In 1983, hospitals in England alone treated nearly 1 million more in-patient and day cases than they did five years earlier. We are planning to build on that achievement with the help of all those who work in the NHS — including, of course, nurses and midwives.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 5 June 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PLYMOUTH MARINE EVENTS BASE BILL

Order for Third reading read.
To be read the Third time tomorrow.

ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for consideration of Lords amendments.
To be considered tomorrow.

BATH CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Third reading read.
To be read the Third time tomorrow.

GREATER MANCHESTER BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Post Office Closures

1. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, when he next meets the chairman of the Post Office, he will raise the closure of post offices.

8. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has recently discussed the criteria for closing sub-post offices with the chairman of the Post Office.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. David Trippier): My right hon. Friend has not recently discussed the criteria for closing post offices with the chairman of the Post Office and does not propose to do so.

Mr. Lloyd: Is the Minister aware that many people will consider that answer to be unsatisfactory because of the way in which the Post Office is using its position as a monopoly supplier in relation to the closure programme? Why are the Government prepared to intervene in the nationalised industries when to do so is to the public disadvantage, but not when such action would help the public?

Mr. Trippier: I compliment the hon. Gentleman in his persistence, because he had an Adjournment debate on the subject on 23 May. I do not think that he has any quarrel with the Government or with the Department of Trade and Industry. His quarrel is principally with his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who was responsible for setting up a Post Office Board with its own board of directors in 1969. It is interesting to note that when the Labour party was last in office it did not intervene once in any sub-post office closure.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Minister nevertheless recognise that the criteria applied by the Post Office to sub-post office closures are unsatisfactory because they do not take account of the wider implications, such as their importance to local communities and the fact that the presence of a sub-post office in a local shop can mean the difference between that shop surviving and closing?

Mr. Trippier: The criteria that are used by the Post Office in deciding whether to keep open or to close sub-post offices were discussed at great length in the debate which took place on the Floor of the House on 23 January. Much more lenient criteria are applied to rural sub-post offices.

Mr. Conway: My hon. Friend will be aware of the concern that has been expressed in Shrewsbury about a recent decision to close four sub-post offices. Bearing in mind the recent denationalisation of British Telecom and the responsibility for the provision of rural services placed on that now private company, is it not time that we reviewed the 1981 Act and the code of practice placed on the Post Office so that there is much wider consultation before sub-post office closures, perhaps with a better form of appeal?

Mr. Trippier: There is nothing wrong with the present system of consultation. I appreciate the concern about the proposed closure of some sub-post offices in my hon. Friend's constituency. I am sure that full advantage will be taken of the appeals procedure as it now stands. It may be of comfort to him to know that 10 per cent. of appeals are successful.

Sir Anthony Grant: I appreciate the constitutional relationship that exists between the Government and the Post Office, but is there a remote chance that perhaps on a social occasion, quite informally, Ministers might raise not only the subject of the closure of sub-post offices but the possibility that at some time in the future first-class post might arrive in somewhat less than three days from the date of posting?

Mr. Trippier: If my hon. Friend has a specific example of mail, especially first-class mail, being delayed, I should be grateful if he would bring it to my attention, and I, in turn, will draw it to the attention of the Post Office Board.

Mr. Ewing: Is the Minister aware that his statement that the Labour Government did not intervene over post office closures is grossly inaccurate? My right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie), who is present in the House, intervened when Sir William Ryland was chairman of the Post Office Board and stopped it from closing post offices. The Minister ought to correct the misleading impression that he has given. Is he further aware that the Post Office's problem was created for it by the Government, who reduced its external financing limit and caused the closure of 5 per cent. of post offices? The Government were responsible for that policy, and the Minister ought not to shirk that fact.

Mr. Trippier: I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman's point about the way in which his right hon.

Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) intervened. He did so under the general powers in section 11(2) of the Post Office Act 1969, which states that he has power to intervene on matters of a general character for remedying

"a defect in the general plans or arrangements of the Post Office for exercising any of its powers."

A particular closure decision cannot be regarded as a general plan or arrangement.

Floating Exchange Rates

2. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many individuals and how many organisations have made representations to him in favour of floating exchange rates in the past 12 months.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): None, Sir.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that international trade was facilitated and that the British economy worked much better when there were fixed exchange rates? What steps are the Governnent taking to encourage greater order in international exchange rates? To that end, when will Britain join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS?

Mr. Channon: As my hon. Friend knows, the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS is not a system of fixed exchange rates. There have been fluctuations in the exchange rates between European currencies and the dollar. Of course all of us, especially exporters, would like a more stable exchange rate, but it is impossible to imagine that there could be a system of fixed exchange rates without enormous pressures on currencies when the rates become substantially out of line with true market values.

Mr. Meadowcroft: How far would European financial stability assist this country in competing effectively with the United States of America?

Mr. Channon: As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox), in the last few months there have been enormous fluctuations in the exchange rates between European currencies and the dollar. We should not avoid that problem by joining the EMS.

Mr. Dorrell: Is it not important to do everything that we can to limit those movements? Is it not unrealistic to expect an expansion of trade in manufactured goods across international frontiers if we cannot tell from one month to the next what revenue we shall receive for given export orders because of fluctuations in exchange rates?

Mr. Channon: I understand and share my hon. Friend's concern about the problems faced by exporters, but it is not just this country which finds itself in that position. Every other country has the same system of floating exchange rates. We must try to obtain greater market stability by encouraging sound monetary and fiscal policies, not only in this country but in many others. That was one of the aims of the recent international summit.

Mr. Gould: Does the Minister accept that there is no such thing as a clean float and that one of the dirtiest elements is the current level of interest rates, which in the last six months has helped to push up the pound against the yen by over 6 per cent. and against the deutschmark by nearly 5 per cent.? Does the Minister think that loss of competitiveness of that kind is helping British business men who are trying to sell in international markets?

Mr. Channon: It is impossible to please the whole House on this issue. Whatever the rate of the pound may be, the Opposition will criticise it. The real point is that it is impossible to move against market pressures on any one currency if those pressures are sufficiently strong. It is an illusion to imagine that fixed exchange rates can work in a situation of that kind. We saw what happened when the Labour Government tried to operate such a policy.

Businesses (Departmental Assistance)

3. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assistance his Department now provides to Business in the Community and to local enterprise agencies.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Norman Tebbit): In the current financial year Business in the Community is receiving a grant of £75,000, and £175,000 has been allocated for support of local enterprise agencies on a pump-priming basis.

Mr. Page: I thank my right hon. Friend for those figures. Is he aware that not only has Business in the Community helped to set up many successful small businesses, but that it has helped to prevent one or two ill-conceived ventures from going ahead, thus avoiding the pain and the distress that would have been caused when the crunch eventually came? May I ask my right hon. Friend to build upon that success by asking the British Overseas Trade Board to liaise more closely with local enterprise agencies in order to encourage the enterprising smaller firms to become more involved in exports?

Mr. Tebbit: Certainly. My hon. Friend has made two good points. The Department's regional offices cover BOTB regional services. They have, of late, been increasing their links with the local enterprise agencies, and we have encouraged them to use the whole of the Department's services. We have also been making presentations on exporting to local enterprise agencies and to other organisations gathering small firms together. That is why, I think, some 75 per cent. of BOTB users are, indeed, small firms.

Mr. Lofthouse: Has the Secretary of State any plans to assist those mining communities which are about to lose their pits, which are their only source of employment? Has he any plans to assist areas such as mine?

Mr. Tebbit: I should be happy if local enterprise agencies were formed in such areas. The concept of the local enterprise agency is that it should be a community, and predominently private-sector, based organisation, although of course a good deal of the funding comes from local authorities and central Government. In addition to my Department's spending, the Department of the Environment contributed £843,000 last year through the urban programme, while the Development Commission contributed £12,000. The Welsh Office contributed £150,000 through the urban aid scheme and the Welsh Development Agency contributed £34,000. Furthermore, the Scottish Development Agency has contributed £280,000. In several areas where there are problems associated with pit closures, funding is clearly therefore

available for local enterprise agencies. I hope that some of them will be of help to those setting up in business in such areas.

Mr. Maclean: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in its first 18 months of operation Business Initiatives Carlisle, a local enterprise agency, helped to create more than 100 small businesses with more than 200 jobs? Does he agree that although his investment of £175,000 in local enterprise agencies is most welcome, it is desirable to give yet more resources to such agencies, because helping successful organisations, such as BIC, is one of the best investments for creating jobs that the Department can make?

Mr. Tebbit: I appreciate my hon. Friend's comments. However, one of the keys to the success of local enterprise agencies is that they have not become the mere creatures of Government but have very live and valuable support from local industry. It is local industry that benefits most from supporting other parts of local industry. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that funding is predominantly of a local nature.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I welcome the Secretary of State's support for Business in the Community and local enterprise agencies, but will he say something about the future of the Department's small firms service? Is he aware that many small businesses welcome the service provided by his Department? Has the right hon. Gentleman any plans to pass it over to the agency or to other parts of the private sector, or to close it?

Mr. Tebbit: The Department is extremely interested in continuing with its support for small businesses. That is, not least, why we are very active in pursuing policies that are directed towards removing the burdens of Government from small businesses. That is something that is best done through the Government, not through any other agency. Thus, whatever happens, we will remain extremely active in our support for small businesses.

West Midlands (Regional Assistance)

4. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many applications for regional assistance have so far been received in the newly designated assisted area in the west midlands.

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Norman Lamont): Up to 24 May, 369 applications for assistance had been received by the Department's west midlands regional office.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging reply. Perhaps I could put to him the equally important question: is he satisfied that west midlands industry has been adequately informed about the range of assistance available under regional aid so that it might not say that it has not been given sufficient information?

Mr. Lamont: That is unlikely, as we have received more than 7,000 inquiries about regional selective assistance since the scheme's inception. Indeed, in case of doubt, we have gone out of our way to advertise such services, with about 40 seminars, which have been attended by more than 4,000 business men. My hon. Friend might like to know that the inquiries received by the Department and those that have become firm applications are equal to £100 million of expenditure—that is, grants of £11·8 million—which would create or safeguard about 7,400 jobs.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Minister aware of the large-scale redundancies and closures in the west midlands and the fact that, apart from Northern Ireland, that region now has the largest percentage of people unemployed for longer than 12 months? When will the Government recognise the tremendous harm that they have done to the west midlands by their disastrous economic policies? The people of the west midlands want to be able to earn their own living again, but there is no sign that such a policy will come from this Government.

Mr. Lamont: The Government have done two things. First, they have categorised parts of the west midlands as assisted areas. I have given information that shows that potentially there is a great deal of help available for firms in those areas.

Secondly, through their support of British Leyland, the Government have put a great deal of money into supporting not only the motor industry in the west midlands but those who supply it.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: When dealing with the applications, will my hon. Friend ensure that they are not simply transferring existing jobs from one part of the country to another? Has he considered the possible inadvertence of enabling a foreign manufacturer to reduce his surplus manufacturing capacity at marginal cost by assembling in this country? Will he look carefully at the activities of the Sprick Corporation of West Germany and the possible adverse effects on TI Raleigh in my constituency?

Mr. Lamont: Obviously I shall consider the case my hon. Friend mentioned. When giving selective assistance to foreign investors in Britain, one of the major factors that we take into account is the impact on existing firms. Therefore, that is already part of the system.

On the point about transferring jobs, my hon. Friend will know that as a result of our review of regional policy we have tightened the criteria to reduce the element of job shuffling.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: On the question of Government aid to the west midlands, I am sure that the Minister is aware of the critical decision at Talbot, given the hold-up of payments on the Iran contract. Is he aware that with the barter trade arrangements, which we know are notoriously difficult, complex and at a difficult stage, the collapse of the Iran contract could prejudice the whole of the Talbot operation in the west midlands, with 10,000 jobs at stake? If his Department is not already active, will he consider taking an initiative to resolve the problem?

Mr. Lamont: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am extremely involved in that matter. We are well aware of the position and are doing everything that we can to help.

British Leyland

5. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Government's future commitment to British Leyland.

Mr. Tebbit: The Government remain committed to the restoration of BL to commercial viability.

Mr. Strang: Is the Secretary of State prepared to go down in history as the saboteur of Britain's only major indigenous motor manufacturer? Does he admit the accuracy of the report in today's *Financial Times* that Austin Rover is to be forced to rely on Honda engines, which, combined with the privatisation of Jaguar and the proposed privatisation of Unipart, make industrial sense only if the Government are planning to facilitate the eventual takeover of BL by Honda or some other multinational?

Mr. Tebbit: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question is no. The answer to his point about the article in the *Financial Times* is that I have no intention of commenting upon an article that is a sort of bouillabaisse — a fishy stew; a mixture of truth, half-truth, inaccuracy and downright untruth.

Mr. Spencer: Before my right hon. Friend commits further sums of public money to BL, will he fully satisfy himself that it has learnt the first rule of business—that the customer is always right?

Mr. Tebbit: Yes; and I am of the opinion that that lesson has been well learnt.

Mr. Williams: Does the Minister realise that if he were as ready with decisions as he always is with insults, BL would not be waiting after six months and the British Steel Corporation would not be waiting after 11 months for decisions about their futures? Does he accept that this inexcusable dither and delay by himself and his Department is damaging BL and that the uncertainty is stimulating and provoking the very type of speculation —I hope false—that we have seen in the newspaper that used to employ the right hon. Gentleman? The standards there have not changed at all. Is not this speculation destroying the morale that has been carefully built up during BL's recovery period? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that if there is any truth in the proposition that BL is to be forced to drop engine production and to buy Japanese engines, so giving up high value skilled work in exchange for low value Meccano assembly operations, that will trigger off a massive storm not only in the west midlands but throughout the car and components industries?

Mr. Tebbit: I have to say of my employer of some 30 or 40 years ago that the standards seem to have gone down as the pay has gone up. I take note of what the right hon. Gentleman says. However, although we received the original corporate plan for BL some months ago, at a late stage in our consideration of the plan, BL and Honda put to the Government some important proposals for collaborative projects. That changed the nature of the corporate plan. It is not unreasonable that we should have given extremely close consideration to those proposals. We are now nearing completion of our scrutiny of the corporate plan and the proposed further collaborative arrangements with Honda. I hope that I shall be able to announce our conclusions shortly.

Mr. Forth: Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that, at this stage in his deliberations, he fully appreciates the crucial importance of the continuation of engine production by motor manufacturers, such as the Austin-Rover group, to their viability as full-scale manufacturers, and the key importance to the west midlands of that production?

Mr. Tebbit: I fully undertstand what my hon. Friend says, but, having been firm in what I said to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) about the fact that I shall announce our conclusions shortly, it would be wrong if I commented by way of half statements on bits and pieces of the proposals before us.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Even in advance of that statement, can the Secretary of State agree that it is vital for the whole of the British industry and economy that we retain the volume production of cars at British Leyland? Will he give a pledge that he will do everything in his power to sustain the volume production of cars, which can be done only if engine production is continued?

Mr. Tebbit: I am anxious to ensure the success of BL from every point of view. I am conscious of the fact that motor cars that appear to the consumer to be British have had some foreign production. For example, on average, about half of a Ford motor car is British, about a third of a GM Vauxhall is British, and over 90 per cent. of a BL car is British. Therefore, we have a clear interest in that and also in the fact that BL is a British car exporter, alongside Jaguar, although on a different scale. We are acutely conscious of BL's importance in the British industrial scene.

6. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with BL on the future of the commercial vehicles industry.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The prospects of BL's commercial vehicles business are covered in the company's annual corporate plan.

Mr. Dalyell: What can Her Majesty's Government do to assist the continuation of commercial vehicle manufacture in Bathgate?

Mr. Lamont: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the decision about Bathgate has been made and, unfortunately, that decision will not be changed. As regards assistance to the area and alternative uses for the plant, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is obviously prepared to view sympathetically applications for alternative use of the plant, or bits of it. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the travel-to-work area is a development area and therefore qualifies for the highest level of assistance.

Skill Shortages

7. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from industrialists about pressures on output through difficulties in recruiting skilled or semi-skilled labour in recent months.

Mr. Channon: My Department has received a number of such representations, notably but not exclusively in the area of information technology.

Mr. Latham: In view of the concern expressed by knitwear firms in Leicestershire recently, will my right hon. Friend undertake to have discussions urgently with the Department of Employment to see what can be done to deal with the problems and in particular to encourage recruitment and training?

Mr. Channon: I agree with my hon. Friend and I shall do that. I know that as a result of his questions to my right

hon. Friends a special Manpower Services Commission investigation is taking place. My hon. Friend has raised a very important issue.

Mr. Eastham: May I remind the Minister that British industry does not compare with its foreign competitors in investment in training for skill shortages? Is he aware that France invests twice as much as Britain, and that in America six times as much is being spent on training? Is it not time that the Minister got in touch with industrialists, shook them and told them that they have responsibilities to provide trained personnel?

Mr. Channon: I agree that industry has responsibilities. If the hon. Member is talking about Government expenditure on training, I am surprised to hear what he says. After all, total expenditure has risen from £380 million in 1979 to £1·2 billion in 1985-86. That does not seem to me to be a reduction but rather an enormous increase and something that the whole House will welcome.

Mr. Cockeram: Is it not a criticism of schools and technical colleges that employers have so much difficulty in finding suitably qualified personnel? Has the Minister seen in the *Daily Telegraph* every Thursday 10 to 14 pages of advertisements for technically qualified staff? Is he aware that employers continually complain that they cannot get suitably qualified applicants?

Mr. Channon: That is one of the reasons why my right hon. Friend has authorised a substantial contribution of £12·5 million from the budget of the Department of Trade and Industry towards the package that has been made available to provide additional places in higher education for students in engineering and technology.

Mr. Ashdown: Is it not the case that this autumn, as last autumn, there will be a significant number of unfilled vacancies in apprentice training establishments, both in the public and in the private sector, because firms cannot afford to fill those places? In that case, will the Government urge the Manpower Services Commission to fill those places at public expense so as to overcome the skill shortages that are affecting British industry?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Member has raised a number of very important points that are primarily the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. I must reiterate that expenditure on training is high. Special steps have been taken in higher education as well. I am sure that my right hon. Friends, and the Secretary of State in particular, are doing everything in their power to increase the amount of expenditure on training.

Mr. Holt: Does my right hon. Friend agree that while it is essential to train as many people as possible, there is a vast reservoir of trained and skilled people who are unemployed? Is he aware that the main reason why they are unable to find jobs is that they cannot find anywhere to live, however far they ride on their bicycles? Is he further aware that it would be a saving for the Government and the country if my right hon. Friend could ask the Secretary of State to suggest in Cabinet that, when a man has been unemployed for six months, the Government might give him an advance of another year's unemployment benefit as a deposit on a house in another part of the country, allowing him to fill a skilled job, thereby saving the unemployment costs and improving the efficiency of the country?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend has raised a very interesting point. I shall certainly make sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is aware of it.

Mr. Williams: Does the Minister agree that it is to be deplored that the Government, through the trebling of company liquidations and the destruction of manufacturing industry at double the rate of our European competitor countries, have created conditions in which, even if there were world growth, Britain could not obtain its fair share because we no longer have enough industrial capacity? Does he not recognise that even more grotesque is the fact that, even with the present limited level of growth, many sections of British industry cannot take full advantage of it because of skill starvation? That is the direct result of the Government's blind destruction of the skill training system that they inherited.

Mr. Channon: The right hon. Gentleman churns out that gush at every Question Time and it is no more valid today. The growth in the British economy this year is likely to be the highest in western Europe, and certainly the highest in the European Community. The economy is expanding. Training is a problem, but the Government, as the figures show, have done their utmost to try to provide more money. As has been said industry also has a responsibility for training.

Rates

11. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the effect of rates on trade and industry.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A number of representations have been received from various bodies on behalf of industry and from individual business men expressing concern at the adverse effects of rates increases on industry.

Mr. Favell: Is my hon. Friend aware that Stockport and Manchester are next door to each other and that there is not a blade of grass between the two? Is he aware that the rates in Stockport are two thirds those of Manchester, that Stockport has half the number of local authority employees per head of population and that at the height of the recession, between 1977 and 1981, employment went up in Stockport by 4 per cent. when in Greater Manchester as a whole it went down by 9 per cent.? Does he draw any conclusions from that?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend makes a good point. I am not sure that I need to underline his conclusions. Obviously, rates increases cost jobs. Perhaps he should send a copy of his question to right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Crowther: Is the Minister aware that in my constituency the rates levied on industry and commerce could be at least 30 per cent. lower if the Government of which he is a member had not progressively reduced the rate support grant year by year? Will he therefore make representations in appropriate Cabinet circles for the terrible rate burden to be reduced by restoring the rate support grant to its former level?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman's assertion would be more convincing if local authorities elsewhere in the country had not managed to combine a reduction in the rate support grant with modest rate increases. If empty buses did not travel half the night through Sheffield, the rates there would be a lot lower.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Can my hon. Friend explain to hard-pressed employers in Southend, who pay a lot in rates despite the excellent prudence of the splendid Southend borough council, why they should pay quite so much when the agriculture industry makes no rates contribution whatsoever?

Mr. Lamont: Fortunately, I am not responsible for *The Times* this morning, the Department of the Environment or for agriculture so I shall pass on that question.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) has his facts wrong, because there is a considerable area of grass between Stockport and Manchester? The biggest problem is that for years Stockport has neglected many of its old council houses. Is the Minister aware that, like the hon. Member for Stockport, I should like them to be modernised? Is not the problem that such modernisation involves local government expenditure, not only in money but in staff, to ensure that the work is done?

Mr. Lamont: Yes, but other local authorities have absorbed cuts in the rate support grant. Local authority expenditure in England has been rising by about 8 per cent. in real terms. There is no reason why people should expect to be subsidised by the general taxpayer in that respect.

British Leyland

12. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has had any recent discussions with the chairman of BL concerning future investment.

Mr. Tebbit: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Hughes: When will the Secretary of State realise that unemployment is now the principal concern throughout the country? Will he bear in mind that the motor industry is a major employer of labour, and therefore that new investment is vital? Does he agree that without it we shall hear further redundancy announcements such as that recently made by the Girling company in South Wales?

Mr. Tebbit: I am able to assure the hon. Gentleman that I am aware of all those matters and, of course, as he will be aware, the number of people in work in the United Kingdom has been increasing since the first quarter of 1983.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: I think that all hon. Members will have been reassured by the measured and constructive tone in which the Secretary of State has spoken of the importance to the whole of Britain—the components industry, the capital goods industry—of British Leyland, but we are looking to him now to put his money where his mouth is. In that respect, can he confirm that he shares the view that an essential part of British Leyland to play will be in the continued manufacture of the power train—engine and gearboxes—in this country, and will he back the Austin Rover new engine project?

Mr. Tebbit: I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that, if it comes to a question of money and mouth, he should recollect that since this Government have been in office we have directly contributed something like £1·2 billion to the restoration to viability of British Leyland. Beyond that, I would advise him not to go too far in praising me—it might upset his hon. Friends. I hope that I shall be able to make a statement before too long which will please all those of a constructive frame of mind.

Local Investment

13. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will have discussions with representatives of local enterprise boards and of industry with a view to securing a co-ordinated approach to local investment.

Mr. Trippier: I frequently meet representatives of local and national bodies concerned with investment in industry, including local enterprise agencies.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware that there will be a wide welcome in the House for the more constructive Government and business attitude towards the local authority enterprise boards? Will he accept the need for better co-ordination to give prompt help to new and expanded businesses? Can he give the House any assurance of the future of the West Yorkshire enterprise board and about its urgent need for further capital resources?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman makes a very important point. It is essential that I should stress that local enterprise boards, as opposed to enterprise agencies, are companies limited by guarantee and not directly affected by the Local Government Bill currently before the House. I understand that West Yorkshire county council has asked for consent for funding of the enterprise board to a sum of £2 million in 1985-86, and that that is currently before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The hon. Gentleman may be aware that I am constantly trying to encourage the use of local enterprise agencies such as the Leeds business venture, with which I know he is very familiar, as a signposting service and as a one-stop shop. I think that that excellent enterprise agency is in a very strong position with regard to acting as a co-ordinator in getting small firms financed. That will speed matters up and, I hope, remove many of the obstacles and the confusion which the hon. Gentleman has identified in his question.

Mr. Haynes: I listened to what the Minister had to say, but he is not doing very well, is he? He visited a particular boat-building firm in my constituency and made certain promises, and then let it down. Why have these exhibitions been cancelled?

Mr. Trippier: I must confess to the hon. Gentleman that I have not the slightest clue what he is talking about.

Small Firms (Public Contracts)

14. **Mr. Hind** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to seek to increase the level of public procurement placed with small firms.

Mr. Trippier: Contracts must be won on merit, irrespective of company size. However, we recognise that small firms often face particular difficulties in seeking public sector business, and we shall continue our efforts to reduce these.

Mr. Hind: Is my hon. Friend aware that one major problem for small firms is obtaining the details of proceedings in tendering for Government contracts? Can he tell us whether he has taken any measures to improve that situation and what he can do to assist those small firms?

Mr. Trippier: Only yesterday I published a new booklet entitled "Tendering for Government Contracts", aimed at helping small firms to sell to Government Departments. The booklet describes the types of goods and services that Government Departments buy, and explains how to apply and whom to approach in the major purchasing Departments. Obviously, I hope that it will be widely used.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does not the existence of 10 major defence research establishments in the south and south-east of England have a major effect on procurement policy for small high technology companies in the south of England? Does it not put such companies in the south at an advantage? Why cannot we have the same advantages in the north? Why cannot some of those defence establishments be moved to the north of England, bearing in mind all the spin-offs that they have for the information technology industry?

Mr. Trippier: It will probably interest the hon. Gentleman to hear that only this morning I was looking at the number of research establishments in both the public and the private sectors. It will perhaps come as a surprise to him, since he comes from the same region as I do, to discover that we in the north-west have a very fair share of the research establishments available north of Watford.

Mr. Bellingham: Although I welcome the booklet and the obvious benefit that it will bring to small businesses, may I ask my hon. Friend what effect it will have on public procurement generally?

Mr. Trippier: The most important development to have arisen out of the Government purchasing lead that we have taken in the Department of Trade and Industry is that it will encourage the use of interdepartmentally approved lists. Certainly it will improve the standarised procedures affecting small firms. I announced last May that tenders for most Government contracts worth less than £10,000 would be exempt from the normal procedures. That should help small businesses to obtain a share of those business opportunities.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: The Minister spoke about his researches this morning. Is he aware that the northern region of England has the highest unemployment in mainland Britain and is the only region of mainland Britain without a Government-backed research and development agency? Is it not high time that we had such an agency in the north?

Mr. Trippier: The problems of the northern region were recognised in the legislation on regional policy approved by the House last year. In that we said that we would concentrate——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Cuts.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) talks of cuts. I had better tell him that his hon. Friend was referring to the northern region and not the north-western region. Some 97 per cent. of the working population in the northern region were assisted before the changes in regional policy, and the same percentage of people are assisted. In the north-west the numbers of people living in assisted areas have increased as a result of the legislation to which I referred. I am aware of the problems identified by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), and recently we have received a report from Newcastle university entitled "The Location of R and D in Great Britain." We shall study that, and it will be taken into account in formulating future policy.

Manufacturing Trade

15. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the United Kingdom's surplus or deficit in manufacturing trade with the European Economic Community and the rest of the world, respectively, in the most recent annual period for which figures are available.

Mr. Channon: In the 12 months ending March 1985 there was a deficit on trade in manufactures with the other members of the Community of just under £8 billion. With the rest of the world there was a surplus of £3·5 billion.

Mr. Taylor: In view of this horrific trade deficit with the Common Market, which is equivalent to a loss of 800,000 British jobs, does my hon. Friend agree that there is an urgent need for a full-scale inquiry into why our trade with the Common Market is so appalling and why, according to an answer that my hon. Friend gave me the other day, our share of the Common Market's market for manufactured goods is less than it was the year before we joined?

Mr. Channon: It is only rarely that I do not agree with my hon. Friend , but this is one of those rare occasions. He was a member of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry which examined this matter last year, and the Secretary of State replied to its report a year ago. I must point out that 46 per cent., of British exports went to Community countries.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Answer the question.

Mr. Channon: I should love to answer the question if I were allowed to.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) should allow the Minister to answer.

Mr. Channon: It is essential to look at all the facts affecting our trading position and not take any one area or any one component of the trading figures in isolation.

I repeat that 46 per cent. of total British exports went to the Community last year, compared with 30 per cent. in 1970.

Mr. Sheerman: Perhaps the Minister will come down from the clouds of theory and look at real closures. I refer him to the closure of Philips in Brighouse and the impending closures of Philips establishments in other parts of the country, with the result that manufacturing capacity in washing machines, tumble driers and television sets is being taken back to Italy. What does the Minister intend to do about closures, which take more jobs away from us with every day that passes?

Mr. Channon: I am sure the hon. Gentleman welcomes the fact that in the last quarter the volume of our manufacturing exports increased by 12 per cent., which

was a great increase, and that our exports are running at extremely good figures. It must be good for British industry to be competitive, and to be able to export competitively and profitably.

Mr. Gould: Does the Minister accept that the House is intelligent enough to read both sides of the trading account? Bearing in mind that the Minister of State told the House on 1 May that every 1 per cent. increase in import penetration cost the country 250,000 jobs, what connection does the right hon. Gentleman now make between our record trade deficit with the European Community and the record unemployment that we must now endure?

Mr. Channon: The House must also understand that the United Kingdom is and has been in trade surplus for many years. That was not a factor—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oil."] Opposition Members attack whatever commodity suits them. *[Interruption.]* We have heard it all before. Many Opposition Members want us to leave it in the North sea. As hon. Members want to talk about manufacturing, let me tell them that Britain sends 39 per cent. of its exports of manufactured goods to the other Community countries, compared with 29 per cent. 15 years ago. That is a massive increase in exports of manufactures, and many thousands of British jobs depend upon it.

Bosporus Bridge Contract

16. **Mr. Bowen Wells** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has raised with the general agreement on tariffs and trade the credit arrangements for the Bosporus bridge contract.

Mr. Tebbit: The arrangements for export credit operation involving elements of aid are handled under the consensus and development aid committees of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development rather than under the GATT. The Government are currently exploring within those OECD groups the issues raised by the type of credit arrangements offered by Japan for the second Bosporus bridge.

Mr. Wells: Is it not unacceptable that the Japanese Government should put my right hon. Friend in the position of losing a major contract to the Japanese for bridge building although we produced the lowest contract price? Because of the use of subsidised export credits and trade in aid-type arrangements, the Japanese have won this major contract and, thus, are able to penetrate a market that was previously dominated by the British, with a consequent loss of jobs for the United Kingdom. Yet, the Japanese refuse to accept proper trade terms for the entry of our goods. Is it not essential that my right hon. Friend negotiates a watertight arrangement to put our manufacturers and exporters on the same basis as Japanese business men?

Mr. Tebbit: I well understand my hon. Friend's anxiety. As I said the last time when I answered questions on this matter, it does not appear that the Japanese broke any undertakings and agreements on aid. However—*[Interruption.]* If the House is finished, I shall continue. However, what I find—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I seldom see the Secretary of State lost for words. Let him continue.

Mr. Tebbit: I am not lost for words, but I have no intention of shouting above this bear garden, and the sooner hon. Members stop shouting, the sooner we shall get on. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps I should not have said that.

Mr. Tebbit: Of course you should have said that, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker is always right.

The point about the Bosporus bridge contract, which I have sought to make both here and in discussions with the Japanese authorities, is that their dumping of cheap credit to obtain this contract is incompatible with the assurances and policies announced by Mr. Nakasone, under which the Japanese are seeking to limit their trade surplus. That matter is being taken up forcefully with the Japanese authorities, and unless they pay attention, before long other countries will take protectionist measures against them. I hope that they will draw back from the position into which they are getting before it is too late.

Mr. Gould: In the light of the predatory policies being pursued by the Japanese, and in the light of what the Secretary of State has just said, does he accept that this is hardly the time to contemplate unilateral disarmament in trade of the sort with which the Government seem to be flirting in the wake of the Byatt report? Will he listen to the views of the National Economic Development Office, published today, and of his Department's overseas projects board, and ensure that British firms which seek major contracts abroad are not left defenceless against the Japanese and other foreign competitors?

Mr. Tebbit: It is not my habit to flirt. When I get started, I get on with it.

Japan

17. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has received from British exporters about non-tariff barriers in Japan.

Mr. Channon: My Department receives a number of representations from British exporters about non-tariff barriers in Japan.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the failure to export to Japan is often attributable not to non-tariff barriers but to weaknesses in British companies? None the less, last year, the Japanese exported to us £40 million worth of telecommunications equipment, and in return we exported to them only 1 per cent. of that figure. Does he accept that that occurred because we have liberalised our telecommunications market and thrown it open to imports from abroad, while the Japanese have no such policy and close their doors to overseas telecommunications products?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend raises a fair point which, coupled with the points made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in answer to the previous question, is an example of some of the practices of the Japanese Government that are getting the world trading system into a dangerous position. During his visit to Tokyo my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State raised my hon. Friend's specific point, and we shall continue to press the matter.

18. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further progress has been made in talks with Japan on the liberalisation of trade.

Mr. Channon: On 9 April, Prime Minister Nakasone announced a market-opening package of measures designed to bring about an increase in Japan's imports of manufactured goods, further liberalisation of internal financial markets and the internationalisation of the yen. We and our Community partners will be looking closely for evidence of practical steps to implement those intentions.

Mr. Hamilton: Is the Minister aware that the country is becoming increasingly angry about the courteous claptrap that we have heard from the Japanese in such matters during the past 20 years, and about the fact that no progress has been made? Does he accept that the House will give unqualified support if the Government take retaliatory action against the Japanese?

Mr. Channon: The feelings of the House are abundantly clear. However, it would be much more satisfactory and in the interests of Japan and the United Kingdom if the measures which the Japanese Prime Minister promised in July prove, in effect, to open the Japanese market to our exports. That would be a happier solution than having to take retaliatory measures, which would help neither the United Kingdom nor Japan in the long run. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear, there is a grave risk of the world trading system falling into serious trouble and of retaliatory measures being taken.

Regional Policy (Tourism)

19. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what contribution he envisages tourism makes to regional policy, and vice versa.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Tourism can make a positive contribution to employment in assisted areas, and tourism projects in those areas may also qualify in certain circumstances for regional assistance.

Mr. Adley: As flourishing regional airports are fundamental to an effective regional policy and to the growth of regional tourism, will my hon. Friend give the House a categorical assurance that he will do all that he can to encourage the growth of traffic at regional airports outwith the south-east of England?

Mr. Lamont: I recall that my hon. Friend led previous opposition to Maplin and Stansted on regional policy grounds. In view of the statement that may be made in two minutes' time, this is a case of my not venturing where angels fear to tread.

Tourism

20. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the prospects for the tourism industry in 1985.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In the first quarter of 1985 the number of visits to the United Kingdom by overseas residents was 10 per cent. higher than a year earlier, at a new record level for a first quarter. I am optimistic about the prospects for the rest of the year.

Mr. Greenway: Is it not true that a record number of jobs are being created in tourism, and that this service industry is one of the most promising areas for growth in employment? What was the value of tourism to Britain last year, and how many people were employed in the industry?

Mr. Lamont: Over 1 million people are currently employed in the industry. What my hon. Friend says about the prospects for growth in employment is correct. He may have noticed that we are now publishing, quarter by quarter, the growth in jobs in the tourist-related sectors. I hope that that will highlight the point that he is making.

Mr. Heffer: Does the Minister agree that while it is good to encourage tourism to underdeveloped areas such as Merseyside, it would be better if the Government concentrated on rebuilding industry in such areas in order to get the thousands and thousands of workers who are unemployed there back to work? Otherwise, we shall become a national museum.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman has previously urged me to do more for tourism on Merseyside. We need to do things to help manufacturing and services, but we must face the fact that one of the best prospects for growth in employment lies in the services sector, and that includes tourism.

Mr. Ewing: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise out of questions?

Mr. Ewing: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The House is aware that the Prime Minister, who has fortunately just joined us, has told the nation that she has changed her style.

However, we have never been warned that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has changed his style. Could you do something, Mr. Speaker, to protect the House from the shock of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry being nice to people, because if that goes on my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will change his style as well?

Mr. Skinner: Oh, no!

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I too have noticed that the Prime Minister now has more voices than Janet Brown. Today, at Question Time, we have heard from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and he has been nearly as quiet as a tailor's dummy, but, I assure you, Mr. Speaker, I ain't changing.

Sudan (Famine Relief)

3.31 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his action in the light of today's urgent warning of potential famine disaster in the Sudan.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): We have been closely monitoring the serious food situation in Sudan. There are substantial supplies in Port Sudan. The problem is internal distribution. We are now providing £650,000 for the charter of a Hercules to be placed at the disposal of the Save the Children Fund within the next few days for a period of one month. That will airlift emergency food supplies to western Sudan where distribution problems have been acute. We are also providing up to £130,000 for the purchase of a light aircraft for use by voluntary agencies for moving supplies and personnel.

The European Development Council agreed on 23 May to my proposal to use emergency procedures to approve a £6 million project to rehabilitate the railway to western Sudan. I understand that the first phase, which provides special food trains, is already in operation.

We are holding further urgent discussions with the British voluntary agencies operating in Sudan to establish what immediate help we can give.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I am grateful to the Minister for his response. Does he accept that the House, and people in general, I suspect, will feel that it sounds very much like placing sticking plaster over a gaping human need? Surely much more needs to be done to enable the transportation of food from the east to the affected Darfur region in the west. One aeroplane and a light aircraft available to the voluntary agencies are not nearly enough. Will the Minister assure the House that the resources available are not limited by the existing budget, as with Ethiopia, but will be made available according to need? Otherwise a disaster far greater than that which occurred in Ethiopia will take place in Sudan?

Mr. Raison: The proposals that I have just announced amount to much more than sticking plaster. The problem is not the overall supply of food—there is a great deal of food available—but distribution. I believe that our aircraft, which will carry high priority supplementary foods, will be of great value. In addition, as I made clear in my reply, we have also galvanised the European Community to get on with the crucial job of ensuring that the railway line to western Sudan is fully operational. As I told the House, that process is already under way.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Is the railway capable of carrying enough food to western Darfur where the starvation is occurring? How much has the railway delivered to the western parts? Now that the rains are imminent, is it possible to distribute food in lorries from the railhead to the villages where it is needed?

Mr. Raison: I cannot yet say that I am satisfied that the railway is in a condition to provide all the food that is needed; it is a big job. However, I am confident that the steps that we have taken represent a substantial improvement. There is still more to be done on distribution from the railhead. It is a difficult problem, but we are determined to do all that we can to make sure that food reaches the people who are so desperately in need.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Is the aircraft additional to the resources of the Overseas Development Administration, or is it coming from Ethiopia? Is the Minister bearing in mind the views of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, and will the additional resources be coming from the ODA budget or from the Government's contingency budget?

Mr. Raison: We shall be paying for the cost of the Hercules out of our own contingency resources. I stress that we do not intend to deprive our aid project in Ethiopia of anything to mount the aircraft operation in Sudan. It will be a new operation.

Mr. Mark Robinson (Newport, West): I am sure that all hon. Members will welcome the additional assistance that my right hon. Friend has been able to give to Sudan in recent months. Has my right hon. Friend any up-to-date information on the situation in the region mentioned in *The Times?*

Mr. Raison: We get regular reports of what is happening. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend is referring to the western part of Sudan or to the whole area. We get updated reports, and they show clearly that there is, overall, a substantial quantity of food, but serious limitations in the internal distribution of food. We are concentrating on that.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): How about the provision of British-made trucks?

Mr. Raison: I know that the hon. Gentleman is keen on this matter, but large numbers of trucks are already available in Sudan, which has a strong private enterprise trucking industry. It is crucial that necessary spares are made available and, in the west of the country, the railway is the lifeline.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I welcome my right hon. Friend's reply and recognise the grave seriousness of the situation in the Sudan, but does he agree that one of the problems of distribution stems from a shortage of fuel? Will he consider providing fuel so that distribution can be made rapidly?

Mr. Raison: The provision of fuel has been a constant worry, although I do not think that it has ever broken down in the way that was feared. We have contributed $272,000 for fuel for the distribution of our most recent consignment of food aid which arrived successfully in May before the rainy season began.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): The Minister must realise that this response is quite inadequate. It is far too little and far too late. Warnings were given by us in the House earlier this year that the fuel problem was critical and that Sudan needed at least 250,000 tonnes of fuel. We urged the Minister then to act directly rather than through the EEC and we called on the Government to release more vehicles, if necessary from Ministry of Defence stock. The Minister has not done that.

The right hon. Gentleman's comments about the resources now being given for renewal of the railway stock also are quite inadequate. Tenders were being offered by British firms in January, in the expectation that the renewal of the rolling stock would be done by June, so

that, when the rains came, the food aid could go through. As far as we can see, the project has only just been approved and the railway is inadequate to meet the food distribution needs, because only about one fifth of what is needed is getting through.

Mr. Raison: I have a feeling that whatever I announced from the Dispatch Box, the hon. Gentleman's automatic reaction would be that it was too little and too late. The railway, rather than fuel, is the crucial matter. The British Government have made the running throughout. We provided the consultant who prepared the plans earlier this year. I have repeatedly pushed as hard as I can in the European Community to get the project accelerated, because the understanding was always that the Community would implement it. I saw the Commissioner and told him the position a few weeks ago, and, at the Development Council on 23 May, I got it established that emergency procedures would be used. They are being used and the situation is improving, but I accept that there is still more to be done.

Mr. Holland: Six months too late.

Rolls-Royce, Derby

Mr. Speaker: I undertook yesterday to investigate a case of what appeared to be the premature disclosure by the Department of Trade and Industry of the text of a written reply to a parliamentary question put down for answer yesterday by the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope). The matter was brought to my attention by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

I understand that a press release setting out the terms of the reply was intended to be issued by the Department for release at 4.30 pm but was, through an error, sent out at noon.

That constituted a breach of the rule under which answers to written questions may not be issued before 3.30 pm or before mid-day on Fridays. I hope that this rule will be maintained in the future.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): While thanking you, Mr. Speaker, for that statement, I suggest that the House is owed at least a small apology by the Minister about the manner and timing of an announcement which had financial implications for the markets and strong implications for employment.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Norman Tebbit): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for making that statement. You are right to say that the press notice was issued in error, being wrongly sent among a number of other notices to the Central Office of Information at the time required for a noon distribution rather than at the time required for a 4.30 distribution, for which it was intended.

I should emphasise that the press notice did not carry an embargo. Therefore, no question of a breach of an embargo arises, so that on this occasion the press was innocent of any improper behaviour. I can only apologise to the House and to hon. Members who feel that they were inconvenienced for the breach of the rule which you have reiterated, Mr. Speaker.

Airports Policy

3.41 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's policy for airports.

It is the responsibility of Government to ensure that sufficient capacity can be provided at United Kingdom airports, where it is required and in due time. Our policy of encouraging competition in the air requires that there should be enough capacity available, so far as is possible, to all airlines on equal terms.

We cannot direct flights to airports that they do not wish to use. Airports must use the opportunities open to them to attract as many flights as they can through providing a cheap and efficient service for the benefit of the passengers.

To make airport managements more responsive to their customers' and further to assist the growth of our most important and successful airline industry, the Government have decided to introduce legislation, first, to make every major airport into a limited company, and, secondly, to convert the British Airports Authority into a holding company and to privatise it with its seven airport companies.

I hope that local authorities will follow this lead and introduce private capital into their companies, too; but we do not intend to force them to do so. A system of regulation will be proposed to control the monopoly aspects of airports, including charges, to regulate traffic distribution when necessary, and to safeguard essential national interests.

Our air transport industry is the envy of the world and a great success story. It has a turnover of £4 billion and earns £500 million of foreign exchange each year. It is a growing industry, already employing 85,000 people.

It is essential to the continuation of this success, and to the provision of more jobs, that there is sufficient airport capacity. Equally important, this must be done with minimum damage to the environment and to the lives of people living near airports.

It is with solving this dilemma—adequate capacity with minimum environmental damage—that first the Inspector at the airports inquiries, and more latterly the Government, have had to grapple. I should like to pay tribute again to Mr. Graham Eyre, QC, for his thorough and comprehensive report. In announcing our decisions today, I want to stress that we have sought a solution which meets both objectives as far as is humanly possible.

The success of our regional airports depends on them handling more traffic, which in turn depends on a growth in demand and on more airlines deciding to operate services from them. The signs are good. Traffic grew by 12 per cent. last year and is expected to increase by one third more by 1990. 1985 has seen the introduction at regional airports of many new scheduled services to international destinations, and more are planned. The Government will do everything they can to increase flights to and from the regional airports, first and foremost by British airlines. As regards foreign airlines, we recently reached an agreement with the Government of Singapore which allows Singapore Airlines to operate to Manchester. We expect shortly to begin discussions with the United States Government about the basis on which scheduled traffic rights to Manchester for United States airlines may also be granted.

We will continue to study, with representatives of the regional airports, how to increase traffic still further. We will be ready to approve worthwhile investment in new facilities and the improvement of road and rail links where they are justified. We will ensure that competition between all airports, both BAA and local authority, will be on fair and equal terms. We recognise the importance of maintaining access for domestic flights into Heathrow and Gatwick.

Even after taking account of all these efforts to attract traffic to the regions and away from the south-east, the Government, after careful evaluation, have concluded that it is necessary to provide capacity in the south-east for between 72 million and 79 million passengers per annum by 1995. This is consistent with the inspector's planning figure of 75 million passengers per annum. We intend to achieve that figure as follows:

First, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment recently announced approval of the Stolport in London's docklands. This will provide 1 million passengers per annum.

Secondly, the Government have decided to invite Luton borough council to come forward with proposals, which would be subject to the necessary planning procedures to increase the capacity of Luton airport from its present throughput of 2 million passengers per annum to 5 million passengers per annum.

Thirdly, Gatwick airport is expected by that time to be capable on present plans of handling 21 million to 23 million passengers per annum. We have no plans for a second runway at Gatwick.

Fourthly, the capacity at Heathrow in 1995, when all four terminals will be in full operation, is expected to be between 38 million and 42 million passengers per annum. It is very possible that this will be adequate to handle as big a throughput of passengers as runway capacity will allow. The Government have decided to accept the inspector's recommendation that air transport movements at Heathrow should not be artificially constrained and to ask the House to accept the abandonment of the proposed limit of 275,000 air transport movements a year. Even with this, and with all foreseeable technological improvements to the full use of runways it seems likely that runway capacity, not terminal capacity, will be the limiting factor at Heathrow for some years ahead. Nevertheless, it seems prudent to ask the BAA to pursue with the Thames Water Authority the possibility of moving the Perry Oaks sludge works elsewhere. Only if and when this has been done, and in the light of traffic forecasts at that time, would it seem sensible to see whether extra terminal capacity should be provided, and if so how much. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, on whose behalf the Minister for Housing and Construction has acted throughout, has turned down Uttlesford district council's application for planning permission for terminal 5, and no terminal can be built at Perry Oaks in the future without planning permission. We are setting up a study of improved surface access to Heathrow.

Fifthly, I come to Stansted. It will now be abundantly clear that the only way we can provide sufficient capacity to sustain the growth of our successful aviation industry is by terminal development at Stansted, thus bringing into

more effective use the spare runway capacity which is available there. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I have therefore decided to accept the inspector's recommendation to the extent of granting the BAA outline planning permission for development at Stansted. The application was for 15 mppa. The inspector recommended initial permission for this 15 mppa rising later to 25 mppa at Stansted. Although we have granted permission for the 15 mppa recommended by the inspector, we have decided to impose conditions requiring that the development be phased, and limited in the first phase of development to 7 to 8 mppa. The initial development will thus amount to less than one third of what the inspector recommended ultimately. Apart from the planning decision I propose to seek powers to limit air transport movements at airports. Subject to Parliament giving me the necessary powers, I intend to impose an initial limit on air transport movements at Stansted equivalent to 7 to 8 mppa. Any further increases in traffic at Stansted would be subject to control by Parliament, by means of an affirmative resolution. As a result, further growth of traffic at Stansted would only take place when it was seen to be necessary, with Parliament having the decisive role. This should provide reassurance to people living in the area. We have rejected the possibility of the construction of a second runway at Stansted.

In the past, we as a nation have shirked the decisions needed for the growth of air traffic and the jobs that go with it. We are in danger of stifling one of our most enterprising industries and losing out to our continental rivals: Schiphol, Paris and Frankfurt are building capacity well ahead of growth. They no doubt hope that we will shirk the decisions once again. The Government are determined not to.

The decision letters on the planning application and the White Paper, all of which are now available in the Vote Office, set out the arguments for these decisions at length and with clarity. When they have read them, I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will feel that our responsibilities to all the many important and often divergent interests concerned have been adequately discharged.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The Secretary of State has made a major statement on future airports policy. The one thing that is certain is that it gives the green light and go-ahead in the south-east of the country. It represents a list of broken promises. For example, a solemn promise was given to those living around Heathrow airport that the controls on aircraft movements would be respected, but that has been abandoned. Undertakings were also given to Manchester that it would be given assistance in developing as a regional airport. It was also suggested that, by somehow privatising the aircraft industry, we could support regional airports in, for example, Scotland.

Why should we believe the Secretary of State when he says, on the one hand, that he intends to privatise extensively to improve the future of the aircraft industry and, on the other, that he intends to ask the House for greater controls both on air traffic movements and on future developments? Why should we believe, for example, that he will move the Perry Oaks sludge works but has no intention of building a fifth terminal? Why should we believe that the right hon. Gentleman is now going to assist the regional airports when, in effect, he has materially reversed his position since January 1985? In January, he said that he would give every possible support, particularly to regional airports. But the White Paper now makes it quite clear that in future any developments can go ahead only if the market has proven itself and the development is already there. That restriction is quite unacceptable.

What the right hon. Gentleman has done is to say that in future there will be added capacity at Stansted and Luton and increasing use of Heathrow. He is wholly uninterested both in the environmental aspects of the development of the major airports in the south-east and the very real industrial problems of the north. The statement is a slap in the face for regional airports and it should not be accepted by the House.

Mr. Ridley: I quite expected the hon. Lady to respond with predictable, old-fashioned reaction to the suggestion that the airport should be privatised, so I shall leave that typical reaction to one side.

On Manchester and the regional airports in the north:

"The Government rejects the suggestion that the air transport industry should be subject to the damaging restrictions on its operations which would be the outcome of the forced diversion of traffic to regional airports".

If the hon. Lady does not agree with that statement, she might like to know that I was quoting her Government's White Paper of 1978. What was good enough for that Government is good enough for me. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] With the exception of that, there is nothing that the north-west and the other regions have requested in the development of their airports that is not contained in the White Paper. When the hon. Lady has time to read it, she will find that that is so. No restrictions are being imposed on any development.

The hon. Lady appeared to be a little muddled. She accused me of abandoning the limit on air transport movements at Heathrow — about which the House expressed some disquiet earlier in the Session — and suggested that it should be proceeded with. At the same time, she appeared to want to have terminal 5 built, which would have meant more traffic going through Heathrow.

Mrs. Dunwoody: No, I did not say that.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Lady's position, as she set it out, was that she had no desire to see terminal 5 at Heathrow, so she cannot complain both ways.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that very many of the 1·75 million people living around Heathrow, who were dreading the intolerable traffic congestion and noise that would have resulted from a fifth terminal, will be immensely grateful and relieved at the decision not to build a fifth terminal and to turn down the current planning application? I speak also for my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins), who is currently abroad on Select Committee duty.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, especially for mentioning our right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins), who has already told me how sorry he is that he cannot be here, because he would have wished to be present on this occasion. I am pleased to be able to honour, for both my hon. Friends, the Government's pledge that terminal 5 would not be constructed.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that, after our last debate on airports policy there was an overwhelming vote against the development of Stansted? Why has he resolved to flout that vote? Why should anyone believe that the House of Commons will have any control over these matters if he is deriding and insulting the last vote of the House on this issue?

Mr. Ridley: The right hon. Gentleman may recognise two points: first, the vote was on whether the House should adjourn—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Secondly, the inspector at the airport inquiry recommended development at Stansted first to 15 million and then to 25 million passengers a year, whereas the Government are recommending that development should be limited to 7 million to 8 million passengers a year.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on having arrived at the same conclusion about Stansted as that at which I arrived 21 years ago? That was accepted by the Government of the day, despite the reservations of Mr. Rab Butler about the possible effect on his shooting.

I urge my right hon. Friend to go rather further than he has in recognising the enormous importance of the maximum development of Heathrow. It is not just the gateway to Britain; it is the Clapham Junction of air traffic between the American continent, the European continent and the far east. It is important that it should be endowed with all possible facilities to give it its maximum establishment. With the much less noisy aircraft and the shorter take-off now available, the environmental damage will be greatly reduced from what it would have been some years ago.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Perhaps it is auspicious that, 21 years after he considered the matter, the decision should come of age. I agree entirely about Heathrow. The Government's policy as set out in the White Paper will be to use the runways to the maximum capacity, and that is the limiting factor at Heathrow. That will be in the best interests of British aviation and Heathrow which, as my right hon. Friend said, is one of the most important airports in the world, and probably the most important interlining airport in the world.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): The statement on United Kingdom airports makes clear its intentions to make the major airports into limited companies. Will such legislation apply to the Northern Ireland Airports Authority? In the light of the intention to develop regional airports, will the Secretary of State be evaluating the expansion of capacity and use at Aldergrove international airport?

Mr. Ridley: These matters are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, but the offer to assist regional airports in attracting overseas flights will extend to Belfast.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Is this not a case of putting the most capacity in the wrong place to meet the prescription that my right hon. Friend has given —that it will be difficult for London to maintain its competitive position if people are invited to interline by taking a bus around the M25? On the procedural point, why is my right hon. Friend prepared to trust the voice of Parliament to defend Stansted growing beyond the 8 million passengers capacity when he is not prepared to give an opportunity for the House to judge the present position, which it could have done had he followed the precedent of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) in the case of the Windscale inquiry?

Mr. Ridley: Airports will develop the traffic and the type of trade that suits them best under the freer regime that we are providing. I suspect that, more and more, Heathrow will develop into an interlining airport with a major input of domestic services, so the situation that my hon. Friend has suggested may not arise.

Secondly, my hon. Friend spoke about a special development order and I remember how the House, and he, welcomed the decision in 1980 that the Stansted proposal should be pursued through the normal planning process and should not be decided without a full and fair inquiry at which everybody could put their view. We adopted that proposal, and we cannot now be blamed for not changing our horses in midstream to the SDO proposal. The SDO method would have meant that we would be unable to secure the compulsory purchase orders, the listed building consents, the scheduled monuments consents, the trunk road orders, the side road orders and the stopping up and diversion of highways orders that will be necessary in the permission granted at Stansted.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is the Secretary of State aware that his acceptance in principle and ultimately in practice of the development of Stansted airport into one of 15 million passengers per annum will cause the gravest concern in the north of England?

Julian Haviland, who is rightly respected on both sides of the House, reported this morning in *The Times* the Minister's derisory comments about forcing Londoners onto Manchester-bound trains to fly to Paris. Is the Secretary of State aware that that is offensive not only to Mancunians, Geordies and people from Yorkshire and Scotland, but to people from all over the north? Is he aware that as many as 30 per cent. of the people who fly into and out of London airport are not from the south-east and do not want to fly there? Why should millions of northerners have to catch London-bound trains to fly abroad?

What does the statement do about licensing policy as it affects regional airports? What will the Secretary of State do urgently to stop the cross-subsidy of Stansted airport by the British Airports Authority? The right hon. Gentleman has missed an opportunity to unite this nation at a time when it is bitterly divided.

Mr. Ridley: I must differ from the right hon. Gentleman on his three main points, because he is not right. The development at Stansted is limited to 7 million to 8 million passengers per annum, and if the House does not want to go beyond that traffic figure, it lies within the power of the House to prevent it. Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman said that 30 per cent. of the passengers going through London airports are not from the south-east. However, the true figure is that 25 per cent. of the passengers going through London airports are not from the south-east, and of that 25 per cent., 5 per cent. comes from the north-west and the north-east, with the rest from other parts of the United Kingdom. More people come from the

south-west than from the north-west in passing through London's airports. The right hon. Gentleman's figures are not entirely right.

We have met the right hon. Gentleman's point that cross-subsidy to Stansted or any other airport will be stopped by making them separate limited companies. Any flow of funds will be transparent, and it will be made clear that those flows of funds must carry commercial interest rates. Therefore there will be no cross-subsidy.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on continuing to be the Minister who has done most for regional airports of any since the war. However, will he remember that the two crucial matters for the north about the expansion of Stansted are that there should be no subsidy in that area, so that competition is free, and that the supporting infrastructure will be of a limited nature? Can my right hon. Friend confirm that that will be the case in both instances?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I can confirm that there will be no subsidy to Stansted. The only investment will be of commercially raised money paying commercial rates of interest. That will cause landing charges to rise at Stansted to levels commensurate with other airports.

Secondly, the figures that I can give my hon. Friend for the infrastructure needed at Stansted development are £2 million for local roads. As well as that, there may or may not be some investment on rail infrastructure which could be about £50 million. That will be only if the investment appraisal of any scheme considered and put forward by British Rail achieves a positive result.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that his fine words about regional airports fall a long way short of the real commitment that is needed if they are able to compete fairly? How realistic are the limitations on development that the right hon. Gentleman is proposing for Stansted? Surely it will be attractive to airline operators only if it has the fast rail link that the inspector recommended. British Rail tells us that it cannot justify financial investment without far more passengers at Stansted than the Secretary of State is suggesting. Is he not opening the door to the full-blooded development of Stansted?

Mr. Ridley: As an earnest of our intentions to improve and expand flights from regional airports, I point out that there are now 33 international scheduled services from Manchester airport, 14 of which have been inaugurated this year alone. That is a measure of what the Government are doing to increase traffic at regional airports. As I said in the statement, we shall continue to explore ways of getting more flights into the regional airports.

Secondly, on British Rail, nobody has known until now about the development of 7 million to 8 million passengers per annum at Stansted that I have announced today. Until British Rail has had a chance to assess the possibilities, it will be impossible to know how much it will cost and whether it will be economic at all. Far from opening the floodgates to Stansted, the result of my announcement may be that it is not economic to provide a rail link, and that would be a brake upon the development of Stansted.

Mr. Graham Bright (Luton, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on guaranteeing the future of Luton airport and, indeed, offering the prospect of a considerable number of new jobs in the area. Will he confirm that 5 million passengers a year is a final figure and that it will not be allowed to increase? Will encouragement be given to scheduled air services to use that airport, rather than developing the charter traffic that we have had to date?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Luton borough council will be invited to submit proposals, which might be subject to a planning inquiry. I gather that the limit on what can be accommodated at Luton is controlled by national air traffic considerations and is unlikely to exceed 5 million passengers. It will be for the borough council to make such proposals as it sees fit.

My hon. Friend also asked about scheduled flights from Luton. I believe that some are taking place already but there will be no inhibition on scheduled flights to any airport to which an airline applies for a route licence to operate.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Will my right hon. Friend accept that many of my constituents will be bitterly disappointed at the decision not to go ahead immediately with a fifth terminal at Heathrow? They will believe that he does not understand the needs of Heathrow and that, because he has not listened to them, he does not understand the operating needs of the airlines that are using Heathrow.

Mr. Ridley: There is no possibility of putting a fifth terminal in the middle of the Perry Oaks sludge works. I am sure that even my hon. Friend would agree that the sludge works would have to be moved first. Surely it would make sense to decide on the scope and size of the terminal which might be put there when we discover whether any terminal is necessary after the sludge works has been moved.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Why does the Secretary of State not admit the truth—that the huge increase in capacity in the south-east of England will make every Scottish airport less viable and will make it less likely that there will be direct flights from Scottish airports to destinations overseas? Since he has recently announced the continuation of Prestwick as Scotland's transatlantic gateway, what assurances has he received from the British Airports Authority and what guarantees will there be that Prestwick will continue to be Scotland's transatlantic gateway and, indeed, will remain open? Is he aware that we find it very sinister that separate companies are to be set up and that the British Airports Authority will not be privatised as one company?

Mr. Ridley: In the last year there has been a 20 per cent. increase in flights from Edinburgh to London. If that rate of growth continues, I shall have to find still more capacity in the south-east to accommodate the flights that the hon. Gentleman wants to travel on. How he can want both more aviation out of Scotland and less landing space in England beats me. The airport at Prestwick was the subject of a recent announcement in response to a question, and I have nothing to add to what was said at that time.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the removal of artificial constraints on the number of landings at Heathrow will be helpful to many provincial airports? He is to be congratulated on stopping the subsidy to Stansted. Is it not bizarre that for

[Sir Peter Blaker]

years charges for aircraft at that airport have been subsidised by large sums out of the profits of the so-called duty-free shops at Heathrow, to the disadvantage of provincial airports? Will not the change be very important for airports such as Manchester?

Mr. Ridley: I agree entirely with the two points that my right hon. Friend has made. First, it is important to keep as much access to London, and particularly Heathrow, as we can for domestic flights from the rest of the country. Secondly, I confirm that Stansted has benefited financially from the profits of other BAA airports. This should not be the case in future under our proposals.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Secretary of State aware that he missed the point about flights from Scotland to London? We do not want more flights to London; we want more flights from Scotland to destinations abroad without having to come through London. In the case of Prestwick, how does the Secretary of State expect a private limited company to operate Prestwick, given the bias towards the south-east in his statement today? Does his statement not make a farce of the review that was promised for Prestwick? Indeed, have we not heard from him today the pronouncement of a deferred death sentence on Prestwick?

Mr. Ridley: I said earlier that we would do all we could to increase flights from any regional airport. That does not exclude Scottish airports. They are in that category from the point of view of what I was saying. We shall do what we can to license flights out of airports in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Let me make it clear that my statement will not have the effect that the right hon. Gentleman suggested in regard to a public limited company at Prestwick. All that can happen is that it will show a loss in its accounts at the end of the year, and it does that anyway.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated because, for the first time for many years, we have a Minister who has grasped the nettle. Contrary to some of the comments that have been made about Scottish airports, I am confident that they will continue to prosper, as they were doing for a long time before the OPEC oil price increases; they are now recovering. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Scottish airports will be managed largely by Scots?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I can confirm that the British Airports Authority, while still in public ownership, will be invited to continue to have a Scottish vice-chairman and to have a large degree of Scottish management. Of course, if it passes into the private sector those matters will be beyond Government control, but I am certain that it will be in the interests of the new company to make sure that the four Scottish companies are managed predominantly by Scots.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Is the Secretary of State aware that his statement today will be greeted with disappointment and perhaps anger by the northern regions, which will see it as another example of the Government's disregard of their problems? What effect will the statement have on Liverpool airport in my constituency? Will he give an assurance that the sludge works will not be shifted to Liverpool?

Mr. Ridley: I must repudiate both those suggestions. I do not remember a more helpful and determined attempt to assist the north. It is not more runway capacity, terminal capacity or airport capacity that is needed in the north of England, but more flights. The more flights we can get into the north, the more that will help the northern airports to expand and in due course to need more capacity. That is what we seek. I can give the hon. Gentleman an absolutely categorical assurance that the sludge works will not be moved to Liverpool.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will go a long way to meeting the requirements of Manchester airport?

Mrs. Dunwoody: No.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I suggest that the hon. Lady reads the White Paper. Can my right hon. Friend give a firm commitment to the constructive development of an international hub at Manchester? Can he give an assurance that, if British carriers are unwilling or not prepared to apply for flights on viable international routes out of Manchester, the applications of foreign carriers will be approved speedily and will not be subject to the two-year delay that Singapore Airlines had to endure?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that if hon. Members read the White Paper they will discover more than I have been able to explain in my short statement.

I confirm that we intend to try to help Manchester airport build itself up into a hub for the north of England. That is what I said when I offered help to try to bring more traffic to that airport. The Singapore Government applied in March for a flight to Manchester and agreement was reached within six weeks. That is almost a record time for coming to an agreement on such a major application.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that, although we want to do everything that we can to maximise traffic into and out of Manchester and the other regional airports, we want to give our airlines a good opportunity in the countries with which we are dealing. The greatest contribution to jobs that a regional airport can make is by British airlines obtaining traffic rights to fly out of the regional airports to overseas capitals. It is not just a question of welcoming foreigners into our regional airports, but of making deals which will benefit Manchester, for instance, and create jobs in the north.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Is the Secretary of State aware that he is to be congratulated on one matter alone? He seems to have done enough to buy off his own Back Benchers from the north of England, but it is a policy for one region—the south-east—not a policy for the north.

When did Manchester ever ask for further runways or terminals? Manchester has always made one simple request—to be given the flights. It has always been denied that and the Minister has denied it again today. Manchester is not a regional airport. It wants to be a national gateway airport, as promised.

Mr. Ridley: Manchester is a gateway airport and will remain so. If the hon. Gentleman reads the White Paper he will discover that there are already route licences for 1,500 overseas routes out of the regional airports, of which

only 100 have so far been taken up. The problem is to persuade airlines to take up more overseas routes from regional airports. That is the real problem from which all regional airports suffer and that is why the Government have addressed themselves with enormous diligence to trying to help put it right.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on honouring his promise not to construct the fifth terminal? Is he aware that that will bring great relief—*[Interruption]*. It certainly will not be constructed in this Parliament or the foreseeable future.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents suffer more than others from the noise problems, but are not entitled to proper funds to pay for insulation grants? Is he further aware that I am disappointed that the pledges about the number of flights given on 22 February and 21 November 1984 are not to be honoured? We are told that access to Heathrow will be increased, but I do not see how it can be increased by road improvements into London and most people travel to Heathrow by road. Is my right hon. Friend aware that his decision about Perry Oaks will be heavily criticised generally, not only by the Berkshire county council?

Mr. Ridley: I understand my hon. Friend's point of view. He is right that the decision on terminal 5 will be of some comfort to his constituents. Aircraft are rapidly becoming quieter and will become even quieter as new types are phased in. That will make a great difference to the noise in his constituency.

The Government were in a difficulty when the inspector on terminal four suggested that an ATM limit should be imposed on Heathrow and the inspector at the inquiry on terminal five suggested that there should be no such limit. The Government had to make up their mind and put their decision to the House, which will in due course have to accept or reject that decision.

Underground and rail access to Heathrow will be studied as carefully as road access because we must try to improve traffic between London and Heathrow in any way we can. Matters relating to Perry Oaks are perilously close to being the responsibility of my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): What steps will the Secretary of State take to ensure that the environmental damage and difficulties from which people near all airports suffer will be dealt with in the proposed legislation? Can the right hon. Gentleman explain the apparent illogicality in saying that he intends to take powers to limit air traffic movements—to apply immediately at Stansted—and that he also intends to remove restrictions at Heathrow, and presumably elsewhere? Where is the logic in that, when he knows that restrictions on movements are wanted not for commercial reasons, but for environmental reasons?

Mr. Ridley: When the hon. Gentleman reads the White Paper he will see that further protection in terms of abatement measures and of insulation are proposed for those living near Stansted. We shall further develop our understanding of what helps most to ease the pressure on people from aircraft noise.

Perhaps the Liberals would neglect to worry about this, but I have to provide sufficient capacity for the air transport industry to grow and to provide jobs. The decisions are based on there being adequate capacity for planes to land in the south-east of England. That is why, reluctantly, I have to recommend to the House that we should not put an artificial limit on the number of flights that can be accepted at Heathrow. My hon. Friends who represent areas around Stansted have made it clear that they want some protection from too great an expansion of Stansted.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked me how I intended to protect the environment of those who live near Stansted and other airports. The answer is that I intend to impose an ATM limit, which he seems to be against.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): In an attempt to evaluate the environmental impact of the decision on Stansted, having been told the number of passengers per year anticipated, are we not also entitled to hear the Secretary of State's views on the type of traffic which he envisages? If he is prepared implicitly to apply a movements limit to the expanded Stansted, might he also be prepared to impose a night curfew on Stansted? If that is so, does it not imply that he should be looking for charter traffic rather than scheduled traffic?

Mr. Ridley: All these matters are dealt with at length in the White Paper. We did not think it right to accept the inspector's recommendation that there should be night bans at London airports, although the present restrictions will certainly remain and possibly be tightened to ensure that night flying does not increase. A ban would be going too far.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): When the Minister was drawing up the plans for an airports policy did he see the need for the development of new regional airports?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman will know that we had either to accept or reject the recommendations in the inspector's report. It would not have been appropriate to suggest a totally different site, but I confirm that the Government do not believe that any new site, not mentioned today, would be preferable to the sites that we have been studying and about which we have made decisions.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many of my constituents will greet his announcement with great anger and disappointment? They have fought the development of Stansted over 25 years and through two different public inquiries, only to face the decision that he has made today. My constituents are prepared to play their part in the national interest and accept that some development has to take place. I am grateful to him for the limitation to which he has agreed of 7 million to 8 million passenger movements per annum, although I believe that that is far too high a limit. I am also grateful for the fact that he has prevented cross-subsidisation of Stansted airport.

However, will my right hon. Friend accept that his proposals will result in great detriment to the environment of the area and that the people of Sawbridgeworth will have to suffer all the inconveniences of air traffic noise and pollution and a crowding of the very inadequate roads all around that airport, which he has apparently made no provision to improve? Will my right hon. Friend tell me

[Mr. Bowen Wells]

—perhaps his hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction will advise him on this — whether he intends to break the green belt policy that surrounds that airport to the north and to the south, and whether he will prevent the tremendous competition for jobs in an already over-employed area and the inevitable expansion of urbanisation which will occur unless strong measures are taken by his hon. Friend the Minister to prevent it?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction will have heard what my hon. Friend said about the planning aspects of the decision and its future consequences. I have total understanding of the disappointment of some of his constituents and the fears about their peace and the environment of that very pleasant part of the country. But I am sure that he will equally accept that, as a result of that sympathy, we have gone a very long way to limit the development to that which is essential in the national interest for the aviation industry. I think that the House would blame me, with particular justice, if in a few years traffic had to be turned away and perhaps had to go to the Continent and the transport of the country was interfered with. I hae tried through the subsidy assurance and the ATM limit which he mentioned to make this development happen only if it is necessary and economic, and I think the fact that the House will have a further decision to take if ever further expansion were proposed should be of considerable reassurance to his constituents.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): May I ask the Minister not to concentrate on the spin-off to Manchester from the south of the country? What does he intend to do to establish Manchester as a national airport and the economic and tourist gateway to the north-west? What does he intend to do to establish that airport not as a subsidiary airport but as a national airport in a region with one of the highest unemployment levels?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman must acknowledge that the growth of Manchester has been phenomenal. There has been the large growth of up to 6 million passengers per annum hitherto, and we expect that to continue. Indeed, a 30 per cent. further growth to the end of the decade is predicted. That is about as rapid a growth as any airport has ever experienced. Secondly, it is no coincidence that it has taken place during the period of office of this Government. Therefore, I think that, if the hon. Gentleman is at all honest, he will go back to his constituents and tell them what a tremendous boost to Manchester this statement has been—as have been the policies of the Government in the past.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I believe that this is the best news for the British air transport industry since sliced bread, and I should like to congratulate the Secretary of State on his radical, reforming and decisive statement today. I should like to ask him about the environment—this is not the prerogative of the Liberal party, but a matter with which the Conservative party is greatly concerned—and the lifting of the 275,000 limit at Heathrow. Can he say something reassuring to those people who live on the boundaries of that limit? As he knows, aeroplanes are getting quieter, and I think that people should be reassured that the lifting of the limit will not make life intolerable for them.

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As I said in the statement, it is extremely difficult to balance the needs of the industry—I think that we all accept that industry has to be allowed to grow—with the difficult environmental questions about which I share his concern. There is a great deal about this in the White Paper, which I hope he will find helpful. The decline in noise levels has been and will continue to be dramatic as aircraft are required to be quieter, and as we have taken measures to protect the houses of the people who are most closely concerned, so let him not doubt that the Government are keen to do everything that we can to protect the environment of those who live around Heathrow. But let it be said that many people who live around Heathrow do so for the sake of the jobs that they have in the area, and are prepared to accept the noise and the difficulty for the sake of the prosperity that the airport brings.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Minister accept that most people in Greater Manchester will be disgusted by the statement and will bitterly resent the Government's claim that they have anything to do with the success of Manchester international airport? In fact, it is an example of a municipal airport which has succeeded in spite of the Government's hostility to municipal airports. If the Government want to win any friends in the Greater Manchester area, they should consider quickly providing the one to one and a half miles of railway that is necessary to link Manchester international airport to the national rail network and ensure that nearly one quarter of the population of the country are within an hour's journey time of Manchester airport.

Mr. Ridley: That staggering increase in flights, particularly international flights, which has taken place out of Manchester airport has occurred during the currency of this Government. The fact that, of the 33 international points currently served by scheduled services out of Manchester airport, 14 have begun to be served in this year alone is evidence, if the hon. Gentleman needs evidence, that the Government are not in any way prejudiced against it, but if anything are prejudiced in its favour.

Mr. Bennett: What about the railway?

Mr. Ridley: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to the statement, he would have heard that the Government have invited British Rail to examine the possibility of the rail link and to submit proposals for the investment if the necessary tests are passed.

Sir Walter Clegg (Wyre): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members representing northern constituencies disagree a great deal with what has been said by Opposition Members? In fact, the White Paper will be helpful to Manchester, especially as there will be no subsidy to put us at a disadvantage compared to Stansted?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said. I believe it to be true and I believe that the White Paper will give a new opportunity to the regional airports for further growth.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Will the Secretary of State not accept that his statement will be seen as a kick in the teeth to people in all regions of the country, and particularly in the north-west by people who want to use Manchester airport? Will he not admit that in fact he knows that it will not be possible to maintain the ceiling

of 7 million to 8 million movements at Stansted? He knows that, when privatisation takes place, to make it viable it will be necessary to go beyond that limit. That means that the fast rail link and the supporting infrastructure will have to be established, and the rest of the country once again will be paying for London to get the benefits.

Mr. Ridley: I do not see how Manchester can be such a successful, prosperous and thriving airport with a throughput of 6 milion passengers per annum, if the hon. Gentleman suggests that Stansted, with 7 million to 8 million, will be totally uneconomic because of inadequate throughput. It just does not make sense.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): May I take this opportunity to congratulate my right hon. Friend on getting away with such a lot today—which I suspect is probably due to the total incompetence of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), who appeared to fail to grasp what he was talking about?

When the sighs of relief of my hon. Friends have subsided and they begin to read the small print, I am sure that they will realise that this is a package which will upset many and please few and will probably be precisely the sort of fudge about which the inspector warned.

Mr. Ridley: I do not think that it is ever necessary to blame the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). She seldom seems to understand what we are talking about, and today is no exception.

It was not possible, given the situation that the Government faced, to make everyone feel that he had got exactly what he wanted. However, I believe that our decisions will both provide the necessary capacity and do the minimum damage to the environment of the various airports involved. If my hon. Friend reads the White Paper, I feel that he will find many statements in it to reassure him.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that the development of airports such as Newcastle reflects great credit on the local authorities which have had the foresight and will to develop first-class regional airports?

The right hon. Gentleman's statement is a second slap in the face for the north-east. Only last year he refused to allow the Newcastle authority to use its own money to build a parallel taxiway and so avoid delays in landings and take-offs. Now, when the airport is producing more than £1 million of profit for the ratepayers who have provided the capital for its development, he suggests that it should be privatised. Could it be that the right hon. Gentleman regards profits for the ratepayers of the area as grossly immoral, but profits going into private pockets as very good?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman referred to Newcastle airport. He will know that the authority put in a bid for other priorities and then changed its mind about what it wanted. At any stage, if Newcastle airport wants to apply for investment approval for any project, we are always happy to look at it. However, the capacity at Newcastle airport is currently used only to the extent of 54 per cent. The airport needs not more bricks and mortar but more flights. That is why I have concentrated today on the importance of trying to get more flights into regional airports.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his juxtapositioning of the announcement of the privatisation of the British Airports Authority with the go-ahead for Stansted will inevitably lead some of us—I am one—to believe that, rather than today's announcement being made under the heading of airports policy, it might have been made by a Treasury Minister. To allay that fear, will my right hon. Friend at least assure the House that he will privatise the BAA before Stansted goes ahead?

Turning to airports policy——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, though.

Mr. Adley: —will my right hon. Friend accept that trying to provide three London airports, none of which will be fully adequate, is a recipe for disaster? It will turn the M25, even without a channel tunnel, into a solid ring of parked vehicles on numerous days of the week. Will he assure the House much more than he has done so far that the investment in the rail infrastructure for Stansted and for Heathrow will be looked at overall not only in terms of the environment but as part of the environmental costs of airports policy?

Mr. Ridley: Some of us—I am one—will give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks that the rail infrastructure will be looked at in the way that I said, but with sympathy because of the environmental problems.

I cannot foretell how long it will be before it is possible to privatise the British Airports Authority. That will depend on the progress through the House of the necessary legislation. I fear that I must also say that planning consent has now been granted for the Stansted development, and I have no doubt that the authority will wish to start work as soon as the necessary plans are drawn up.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall allow questions on this statement to go on for a further 10 minutes. That means that Back Benchers will have had a full hour in which to put their questions to the Secretary of State. However, I ask for brief questions, in which case I hope to be able to call all those hon. Members who are seeking to catch my eye.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Secretary of State say a little more about the study into improved surface access to London Heathrow? Does this mean trains that will not stop at all the Hounslows? Are we sure that the study is not a broody hen sitting on a china egg? What will it do?

Mr. Ridley: I am not sure to what the hon. Gentleman's last comment referred. There are three authorities concerned—London Regional Transport in respect of the underground, British Rail, and my own Department for roads. I shall bring them together and get them to study very quickly and carefully——

Mr. Dalyell: Study what?

Mr. Ridley: —how to provide extra capacity from the centre of London to Heathrow without causing damage to the environment again. That is exactly what we need to do.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I welcome my right hon. Friend's decision to privatise the British Airports Authority. When does he expect to introduce the necessary

[Mr. Michael Forsyth]

legislation? How will he ensure that the BAA does not exploit its monopoly and that we get fair competition between airports?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The necessary legislation for privatisation will be introduced as soon as possible.

As for cross-subsidy and fair competition, putting each airport into a separate public limited company means that any transfer of funds will be transparent. As I said, we shall make sure that the transfer of funds takes place only at commercial rates of interest. That in itself will cut out cross-subsidy.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Does not today's statement about Stansted mean that once again millions of pounds are to be invested in the south of England? Is it not clear that in a few years this decision will be considered only as a toe in the door, and once again the Government will ask the House to vote millions of pounds, which again will be invested in the south? What consideration has the Minister given to industry and commerce in the north? The Government argue that there is a case for airport developments in the north not just for industry and commerce but also for tourism. How will the Stansted development help the traffic throughput in the northern airports?

Mr. Ridley: The approximate cost of the development of Stansted is thought to be about £270 million. I cannot give a firmer figure than that, because the British Airports Authority has not been able to give me a quotation, having only just heard of the decision.

Mr. Eastham: That is for now.

Mr. Ridley: I do not regard that as a large investment and, of course, it is all from air travellers' money—it is not from public money. The British Airports Authority earns a surplus, and it will be investing that at commercial rates of interest in the new development.

I am as keen as the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) and as Manchester to see further traffic and activity in the north of England. That is why we have put our accent on trying to get more traffic going there. It is from that that the extra jobs will flow and not from building terminals, runways, aprons and taxiways which are not needed.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): In view of my right hon. Friend's concern for the environment around airports, how does he think that the beautiful rural character of the environment of Stansted will survive his proposals?

Mr. Ridley: An increase in the terminal buildings at Stansted will not improve the landscape, but there is an airport there already, and there are terminal buildings. It is conceivably possible that any new buildings will be slightly more pleasant to look at than the old ones. I hope that they are. We have to find a way of marrying careful and good design with our landscape; otherwise we shall become a museum and unable to earn our living.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Secretary of State aware that the concern of Air Ecosse flying from Carlisle to Heathrow is landing charges? Will those charges rise or fall as a result of today's statement?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman may not have heard it, but in my statement I said that the Civil Aviation Authority would be asked to supervise landing fees and charges at the various airports. I think that the result of that is more likely to bring down charges imposed by a monopoly than if we allow the monopoly to be free to charge what it likes.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Further to what my right hon. Friend said about privatisation, is he happy that individual airports which operate as independent plcs will be able to raise the capital required for their future expansion without any cross-subsidisation or Government guarantees? In relation to Heathrow, while uncertainty about terminal 5 persists, does he think that that company will be able to go to the market, especially as today he hinted clearly that, subject to planning, terminal 5 will be built one day?

Mr. Ridley: We shall put the seven BAA plc airports into a holding company, which will be able to make investments in any subsidiary that it wishes. The company which owns Heathrow will be one of the most prosperous companies in the country. The idea that it would not have credit to borrow to build a terminal, if one were necessary, seems unlikely.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does not the Secretary of State realise that he is widely regarded as the Secretary of State for Transport who has dealt a grievous blow to our railway network, who wants to destroy public bus transport throughout the country, and who, with today's statement, has delivered a hammer blow to our regional airports? Does he further realise that millions of people who live in the north can see no justification for resources, whether public or private, being channelled into the south-east, that large numbers of unemployed people in the north can see no good reason for the creation of large numbers of jobs in relatively prosperous areas and, most important, that people who are inconvenienced by the existing travel arrangements can see no good reason for maximising flights from London airports?

Mr. Ridley: I find that a little odd. I think of myself as the Secretary of State for Transport who has presided over the highest rate of investment in British Rail for many years. I should like to claim that I am the Secretary of State for Transport who has freed the bus services from restrictions so that they can be improved and expanded, and who has now put forward a policy for the further expansion of the airline industry, which will bring jobs to all areas.

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): Will my right hon. Friend consider my constituents, who are sandwiched between the development at Luton and that at Stansted? Does he recognise that they are extremely concerned on environmental grounds? Will he say what consolation I can offer them?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is in a slightly difficult position. There will have to be a public inquiry if Luton borough council makes proposals for expansion, and his constituents can put forward their views then. The developments at Stansted and Luton will result in a large number of extra jobs. My hon. Friend can draw some comfort from the fact that many people living in the area will benefit from those jobs, and that many, for that reason, are not wholly opposed to airport development.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The Secretary of State will realise that hon. Members with BAA airports in our constituencies recognise the benefits that we have reaped from the managements, especially in Scotland. Is he aware of the anxiety caused by the fact that nowhere in his statement is there a suggestion that Scottish airports should be retained as a group? Indeed, he said that they would be sold off individually. Can he assure us about that? Regarding surface transport, does he recognise that the one way to help Prestwick airport to survive is to give the go-ahead to an effective rail link?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman may have misheard me. I made it clear that the privatisation of BAA would be achieved by privatising the holding company, and that the separate companies would not be sold off independently. Therefore, the group will remain exactly the same as at present, and there will be little change in the relationship in that sense. The question of a rail link to Prestwick is one for British Rail, which can submit proposals, if it finds that a link is economic. That is also referred to in the White Paper.

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): Although I agree with my right hon. Friend that it is impossible to please everyone on these occasions, I thank him for the courtesy that he showed to the representations made by the North-West Regional Consortium, and the weight given to them in making his decision today. In so far as it is his responsibility, when he looks at the infrastructure requirements for the expansion of an airport which has seen spectacular growth — his statement said that of Manchester airport—will he ensure that investment will not be denied in favour of speculative growth at Stansted?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said. I assure him that the question of investment in the rail link to Manchester airport will be taken on its merits, with regard to both an estimate of the build-up of traffic that will occur at Manchester and the environmental desirability of it. It will certainly not be affected or disadvantaged by anything at Stansted.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on having had the good grace to withdraw the artificial limits on Heathrow movements. Does he agree that that decision is inconsistent with the refusal to grant planning permission for terminal 5 now, which would present a great opportunity to redevelop Heathrow into the next century? Does he agree that Stansted would not be necessary if we had two runways at Gatwick, which the BAA has resisted and that it would be folly to build another international airport with one runway and repeat all these troubles in 30 years time?

Mr. Ridley: It is likely that some parts of the Civil Aviation Bill, to which my hon. Friend referred, will reappear in the later legislation. We regard air transport movement limitations both at Stansted and potentially at other airports as something which may eventually be necessary. That was the purpose of the original legislation. I doubt whether my hon. Friend would receive much support from people living in both Sussexes for his suggestion that there should be two runways at Gatwick. There is an agreement between BAA and the county council that that should not happen, and the Government have no plans to interrupt it. It would mean the demolition of a village and major environmental difficulties, and we prefer not to cause that.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I was pleased that the Secretary of State hoped that landing charges for a small airline at Heathrow would fall. I have a particular interest in Humberside airport. In the event of landing charges not falling, what special action will the Secretary of State take to help small airlines to be competitive and to overcome the problems of high landing charges?

Mr. Ridley: At present, the charges that airports levy are entirely within their control. I have no control over them, either at BAA or local authority airports. I propose that, as part of the new regulatory regime for airports generally, the CAA will have power to supervise landing fees and charges. However, legislation will have to come into effect before that can happen. I am sure that the CAA will want to interpret such a new power by stopping the exploitation of a monopoly and ensuring that the charging structure does not discriminate against any type of aircraft or airline.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Although I appreciate my right hon. Friend's attempt to phase the expansion at Stansted, is he aware that an expansion to 15 million passenger movements a year would be wholly unacceptable to the people of Cambridgeshire? In view of his faith in the parliamentary process, may we assume he will encourage his colleagues to allow a free vote if that matter comes before the House? Before any such expansion takes place, why does he not do what the world's airlines want and instead of talking about sludge pits make a firm commitment to a fifth terminal at Heathrow?

Mr. Ridley: I doubt whether a proposal to increase the air transport movement limit at Stansted will come before the House for many years, because we have not yet imposed it, which is the first step. I cannot anticipate the decisions of my right hon. Friends the Leader of the House and the Patronage Secretary about the nature of the whipping on an occasion many years ahead and, perhaps, in a different Parliament, under powers which Parliament has not yet granted — [AN HON. MEMBER: "And a different Minister."] Yes, I accept that amendment.

As to a fifth terminal at Heathrow, we believe that retaining a large amount of room at Heathrow for domestic flights, as many hon. Members have stressed, is important. The result is that the number of passengers is not as great as was expected when Mr. Eyre reported. If it is not terminal capacity, but runway capacity, that limits the use of Heathrow, it would be wrong to embark on building an enormously expensive terminal before there is a clear need for it.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many will interpret his statement not as one on a national airports policy but as one on an airport policy for the south-east? Many people will be appalled at the perfunctory reference in his statement to regional airports, especially airports in the north. Does he also accept that many people will infer from his statement unfair competition and subsidy by taxpayers for the development of Stansted? Will he explain why a Government who are committed to the

[Mr. Cecil Franks]

operation of market forces cannot allow those market forces to determine the natural growth of Stansted, Manchester or any other airport?

Mr. Ridley: I have not made a precise measurement, but I believe that about one third of my statement dealt with helping regional airports. I would hardly call that a perfunctory reference in what was a long statement. I have given every assurance this afternoon that there will be no opportunity for cross-subsidy to Stansted to the detriment of other competing airports. Market forces will prevail to the extent that it will be for the proprietors of airports, whether Stansted, Manchester or any other to decide whether investments are made at commercial rates of interests.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: As an act of chivalry — Mrs. Bottomley.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the only alternative to the loss of profitable air transport business to continental Europe is to have some expansion in the south-east? Although I understand why those in the affected areas, whether in the south-east or in the regions, are worried, we would all have much more reason to be worried if the Government's decisions resulted in the loss of British jobs and earnings.

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend. The first London airport is Heathrow with 29 million passengers. The second London airport is Gatwick with 14 million passengers. The third London airport is Charles de Gaulle with 13·6 million passengers. The fourth London airport is Schiphol with 10·9 million passengers. The fifth London airport is Manchester with 6 million passengers. Stansted does not even appear on the list.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order I am sorry that I have been unable to call all those hon. Members who wish to take part.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. All that I can say is that I shall give them preference when we have a debate on the subject. It is no good raising a point of order on this matter now.

Mr. Nelson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It will have become apparent to you during these lengthy exchanges that, although there has been strong criticism of the decision, especially from hon. Members for northern constituencies, no Back-Bench Member has supported the Government's policy, especially as it affects Gatwick and the south. Could I trespass on your generosity, Mr. Speaker, and ask you to allow me——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Had the hon. Member who represents Gatwick airport been present, he would certainly have been called. I must protect the other business of the House. It is impossible to call every hon. Member every time. I have gone well over the time that I normally allow—more than an hour—for Back-Bench Members, and I called many Conservative Members. It is unfair to try to raise points of order to continue questions on the statement——

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: As I told the hon. Gentleman yesterday, he does extremely well.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. There are more than 40 Members of Parliament for the east midlands, and the East Midlands international airport was one of the major concerns——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will now take a point of order on a different matter.

Later——

Mr. Greenway: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Very well—Mr. Greenway.

Mr. Greenway: I do not think there is any need to be cross about it; that is what we are here for, is it not? May we have some guidance on the way in which you measure the time that you are prepared to allow on statements? This afternoon, almost a record number of hon. Members rose, but the statement was not allowed a record time.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman any guidance on that. It is a matter of discretion, and I must make a judgment on the basis of the subsequent business on the Order Paper. The hon. Gentleman would have been deeply offended had he wished to speak in the subsequent debate but had been kept out as a result of my allowing the statement to run over time. On this occasion, the statement began at 3.41 pm and continued until after 5 o'clock, which I believe was a more than generous period.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), will you bear it in mind in future that if there is not going to be a vote on such an extremely important matter, every right hon. and hon. Member who wishes should be given the opportunity to ask questions, especially if they represent constituencies such as mine, which will be adversely affected by the decision? This is probably the most important matter to come before the House this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker: There will be subsequent opportunities to debate the matter at Question Time, and there will be legislation in due course. I have already told the House —I keep my promises in this regard—that those who are unable to ask questions on statements are given preference when we come to debates. In fairness to other hon. Members, I cannot allow questions to continue for ever. If I did, we should never get our business finished.

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Many hon. Members will know that, for some years, the length of statements has grown considerably, and I believe that you were extremely generous in your handling of the matter today. It is not the privilege of every hon. Member to be called every time he rises. That has frustrated many of us for many years, but you should appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that some of us understand how generous you are. Secondly, on a purely parochial note, we Members from Scotland would like to get on with our business.

Mr. Speaker: I am grateful to the right hon. Member. In deference to those hon. Members who have raised the

matter, may I say that I fully understand their anxiety. I am conscious of the fact that they have constituency interests in this matter. There will be other opportunities to discuss it, and hope that they will use them.

Falkland Islands (Member's Statements)

5.4 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that I raised a point of order on 15 May, when I drew your attention to early-day motion 686 on a statement that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) was alleged to have made during a visit to the Falkland Islands.

[That this House condemns the reported statement of the honourable Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley that the Falkland Islanders lacked guts and calls upon him to withdraw the statement; and further calls upon him to give up his campaign of rewriting the history of the events before, during and after the conflict which is designed to justify his attitude towards the sending of the Task Force to restore freedom, the rule of law and democracy to the islands after the unprovoked invasion by the Argentinians.]

There is a letter in the *Daily Telegraph* today from the lady in question, Mrs. Pat Luxton. Bearing in mind the fact that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley was also reported as saying that he had evidence that sinking of the fishing boat Mhari L had been caused by a United States submarine, which has since been proved to be untrue, what procedure can be used to remove the uncertainty about the validity of those reports, since I have withdrawn my early-day motion?

Mr. Speaker: This matter was dealt with. Apologies were offered and accepted, and I cannot be concerned——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot be concerned with letters that appear in the press which may seek to reopen the matter. I shall allow the hon. Gentleman to comment, but then I must close the matter.

Mr. Foulkes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am worried by the fact that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) sought to link those two matters. I confirm that the account by Patrick Watts and Mrs. Luxton has been altered by them in three separate ways. First, they accept that there was no breaking of glass. Secondly, they accept that the Secretary of State for Defence was not involved. They have even now given a different version of what I am supposed to have said. Yet I have maintained consistently exactly what I said, which is supported by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), who spoke to eye witnesses. I stand by what I said, notwithstanding what the lady said in her letter in the *Daily Telegraph* today.

As to the Mhari L, I made it clear that circumstantial evidence was given to me—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] I made that quite clear. In the light of the inquiry, I am grateful for the opportunity of saying that the direct evidence shows that it was not a submarine. I fully accept that. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman linked the two matters, and I am sure that he would wish to withdraw the implications of his doing so.

Mr. Speaker: Let us leave the matter there.

Local Authorities (Political Expenditure)

5.10 pm

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make provision relating to expenditure by local authorities for political purposes.

The object of the Bill is to ban the use of ratepayers' and taxpayers' money for politically motivated propaganda. Local authorities have a duty to inform the public about their services and to provide proper information services about their areas. Such activities have always been regarded as valid.

Before the reorganisation of local government in the early 1970s, considerable anxiety was expressed in a series of reports that the information activities of local authorities were too limited. Provision was then made in the Local Government Act 1972 to allow the development of a range of information services. There was a considerable development in publicity activities by local authorities after 1974. In recent years, however, those activities have grown enormously and extended beyond the scope of giving information to the dissemination of party-political propaganda.

Since 1980, we have seen a series of political campaigns by local government, many of them opposing Government policy on matters relevant to local government. They have included the abolition of the metropolitan county councils, rate limitation, the extent of council house sales, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and many other topics. There have also been campaigns on matters unconnected with local government —nuclear disarmament, the miners' strike, the future of some industries, immigration controls, and so on.

In promoting such campaigns a wide variety of normal advertising techniques have been used, including leaflets, posters, stickers, advertising space on hoardings, the national and local press and, to a limited extent, radio and television. Such diversity makes it exceedingly difficult to identify all expenditure on political activities, but some figures are available.

As so often happens, the worst offender in regard to wasteful expenditure has been the GLC. Its current "awareness campaign" anticipates expenditure of £10 million over about three years. That sum is greater than the total expenditure of many district councils. West Yorkshire county council has spent approximately £600,000 campaigning against the abolition of metropolitan county councils, and the West Midlands county council has spent approximately £500,000. Large sums of money are now being spent on opposing the Transport Bill and on a plethora of other party political activities.

Justification for such activities is often based upon sections 111, 137 and 142 of the Local Government Act 1972. Those sections are widely drawn and do not include any control over party political propaganda of the type that we have seen recently.

There have been a number of court cases on those matters and so far none of them appears to have succeeded in curtailing the use of taxpayers' and ratepayers' money for those ends. Although expenditure under section 137 of the 1972 Act is limited, it is possible to justify considerable expenditure under section 142.

The lack of clarity in the relevant statutory provisions presents considerable difficulties to auditors in accounting for such local government expenditure. There is no adequate provision in law to distinguish between the dissemination of party political propaganda and the supply of unbiased information, which was clearly envisaged when the 1972 Act was passed. The Bill seeks to remedy that defect.

Apart from the supply of information, there are other matters of anxiety. Voluntary organisations outside the local authority structure are often used in campaigning by local authorities. Funds are often passed to them for campaigning. There is also a problem with the involvement of local authority staff in such campaigns as part of their day-to-day work. Staff can be pressured into participating in such activities when they wish to retain freedom of thought and action in party political matters. There are also instances of the establishment of trust funds controlled by political parties for party political ends.

A new height of outrage has been reached recently by the West Yorkshire county council with its biased approach. It has allocated ratepayers' money for highway maintenance in areas on the basis not of need or fair treatment but of the political representation of those areas. All those matters could be dealt with in a Bill banning the use of ratepayers' money for such political purposes.

There is clearly a requirement for local authorities to provide newsletters and newspapers to give information. If such publications were produced, the Bill would provide for equality of treatment between all political parties where political comment was seen to be proper.

There is plainly a major problem of definition in drawing the dividing line between what is information and what is politically motivated propaganda. There is a precedent, which the Bill could use, based upon the Independent Broadcasting Authority's code of standards and practices. That code expressly prohibits advertisements which are directed towards any political end, local or national, and which are not impartial on matters of political or industrial controversy or current public policy, local or national. That definition has worked well for the IBA, and it would form the basis of the definition in the Bill.

In our democratic society, reasonable people object to the use of public money for political purposes. There are sound reasons for their objections. The task of local government is to provide local services. In many instances, the publicity material produced has little to do with the provision of those services. Much of the recent publicity has flouted the long-held convention that public funds should not be used to gain party political advantage. Such expenditure involves the diversion of resources from the provision of services to the community. It is wrong to use scarce resources for party political propaganda when they should be used to provide services.

It is disgraceful that some councils claim that they have insufficient money to provide public services when they divert a great deal of money towards gaining political advantage. Such party political propaganda means that public debate is diverted from Parliament. Extra-parliamentary activity on that scale tends to undermine the role of Parliament.

What further offends ideas of fair play is that the information in so much of the publicity material is often

based upon unsubstantiated allegations and is rarely grounded in fact. It is designed to play upon the emotions and arouse unjustified fears.

The time has come to prevent the use of public money on party political objectives. The political debate must be encouraged, but when people wish to put forward party political views they should raise funds to do so. To steal money from the public to further political objectives is a national disgrace, and it must be ended as soon as possible. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Roy Galley, Sir Paul Bryan, Mr. Marcus Fox, Mrs. Jill Knight, Mr. Gary Waller, Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock, Mr. John Butterfill, Mrs. Edwina Currie, Mr. Michael Brown, Mr. Geoff Lawler, Mr. Tony Favell and Mr. Derek Conway.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES (POLITICAL EXPENDITURE)

Mr. Roy Galley accordingly presented a Bill to make provision relating to expenditure by local authorities for political purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 July and to be printed. [Bill 154.]

Orders of the Day

Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill

Considered in Committee

[SIR PAUL DEAN *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

RATES REBATES

5.20 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 5, leave out 'may' and insert 'shall'.

The amendment has the virtue of being short and simple.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): Hear, hear.

Mr. Dewar: I knew that that would immediately appeal to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie). We constantly think of him, particularly when we are looking for some old-fashioned Tory independence, as we are in this debate.

The Bill says that the Secretary of State may provide for revaluation rebates. We suggest that the discretionary "may" should be made a mandatory duty on the Secretary of State and that he should operate a similar system in future years.

We are returning to a point with which the Committee is familiar. It is the problem of what is to happen in the remaining part of the quinquennium once the rescue package for 1985-86 is behind us. We say that there is considerable merit in trying to ensure that the Government are committed to continuing relief—I shall deal later with the objections that are likely to be made by the Minister—during the remainder of the quinquennium. It would be thoroughly unsatisfactory if there were help in 1985-86, but nothing in subsequent years. The Bill does not preclude the possibility of further help, but there is no guarantee that it will be forthcoming. It is common sense that Parliament should put that right. I note that the Under-Secretary of State is messenger boy for the Secretary of State again today—the right hon. Gentleman is not here; he is quite a stranger in Scottish debates these days. We regret that fact.

Mr. McQuarrie: The Secretary of State is doing a job in Scotland.

Mr. Dewar: I should be happy if the right hon. Gentleman were doing a job in Scotland, though if he were, he would, once again—because of his policies—be out of step with everyone else in Scotland.

If it is necessary to have the rescue package, which was not contemplated a few short months ago, in the current financial year, why is such a package not necessary for future financial years? Give or take one or two minor adjustments, we shall have the same valuation roll for the next five years. If we do not get a guarantee that the system

[Mr. Dewar]

will continue, there will be considerable help in the current financial year and the full force of the revaluation will suddenly fall on those who are getting some assistance, limited though it is, under the Bill.

The Under-Secretary might argue that rates could decrease if local authorities would cut their expenditure and reduce their services to the public. I might say that rates could be reduced if the Government would restore the rate support grant that they have filched over the years. A third party looking at the exchange might say that it was an arid argument—and I might have sympathy with that view.

Let us compromise by saying that it is almost self-evident that the possibility of a substantial decrease in rates in the next year or two is one on which, to say the least, we cannot count. We can apportion the blame for that on another occasion.

The Bill seeks to deal with what are seen as inequities arising out of the revaluation. However, is it fair that a householder should be faced with a threefold or fourfold increase in his rateable value while others face increases only twofold? Why should a business suddenly be faced with an enormous sevenfold or eightfold increase in its rateable value while its competitors are more lightly treated?

The Government have said that they will remove the peaks and even out the effects of the revaluation. They are aiming to alleviate the wide variations. However, if the Bill is aimed at dealing with the individual disasters and horror stories that have arisen from the vagaries of the revaluation process, the exercise should be repeated each year.

The Under-Secretary may say that our proposal is unfair and is far too rigid, because it would commit the Government to maintaining a system based on a multiplier of three times the pre-valuation rateable value. If that stops hon. Members supporting the amendment, they should turn their attention—their support would be welcome—to amendment No. 3, which would allow a variation of the multiplier in the Bill. Putting the multiplier in the Bill, rather than leaving it to the statutory instrument, itself creates inflexibility, but the Government have decided on that course and we have to live with it.

The other argument that may be used by the Minister is that these matters should be left to the discretion of the Secretary of State and that we can rely on his good judgment and his perception of what makes political, social or economic sense in Scotland. The sad truth is that this matter is not within the discretion of the Secretary of State. As I pointed out on Second Reading, that fact was brutally brought to our attention by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on his foray to Perth for that gathering of the faithful which the Tories dignify with the name of a conference. The Chancellor then made it clear that he was —I use his phrase—"bailing out" the Secretary of State. He said that there were no more moneys likely for Scotland next year and added:

"I do not think the Secretary of State will find me in the same compassionate, open-handed and generous mood next time."

5.30 pm

It is clear, therefore, that the Treasury will have a considerable say in what happens in future. I give Conservative Members credit for wanting to see this system continued for the rest of the quinquennium. The trouble is that the Treasury might mount a punitive expedition against the Scottish Office on this matter, and the Treasury often wins.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that it is possible for the Secretary of State to meet the obligation as part of the rate support grant, without the Chancellor having to bail him out? The problem this year was that the rate support grant had already been determined.

Mr. Dewar: I accept that the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) is producing a solution, but in doing so he is inviting the Secretary of State to find the money at the expense of local government services, and that is not acceptable to my hon. Friends and me. It would be going back to the so-called "first help from the Secretary of State" scheme, when the domestic element was raised to 5p in the pound.

I do not know how many Conservative Members have bothered to look up the details, but the hon. Member for Stirling will remember how the Secretary of State made a great virtue of the help that he was giving, when in reality £19 million came from the Secretary of State and £31 million came from the unfortunate local authorities. The remainder came from the proceeds of industrial derating from 50 to 40 per cent.

If it is said that we can make progress by cutting services in that way, the hon. Member for Stirling must realise that such a suggestion is totally unacceptable to Labour Members. The whole point about the £50 million —I wish to be fair to Ministers because they made a tremendous virtue of it at Perth and elsewhere—was the claim by the Government that it was new money and that it represented a victory at the expense of the Treasury. We can on occasions be generous, and that is why on this occasion Opposition Members are fighting to preserve the victory of the Secretary of State and want to help him beat off a counter-attack by his rapacious colleague, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Conservative Members would do well to consider the impact of a sudden withdrawal of the concession. Consider what would happen if the Treasury won the battle for the financial year 1986-87 and instead of £30 million—or whatever the figure may be that will be paid out of the £50 million; we shall debate that whole issue later — suddenly nothing was available.

In those circumstances, the electoral impact would be considerable. I trust that nobody will suggest that Conservative Back Benchers are above such political considerations; too many of them are looking nervously over their shoulders at their electoral prospects, and discouraging they are. I recommend them to consider the practical impact of allowing this help to be discontinued after the current financial year.

There is, therefore, political common sense in what I am arguing. However, it is also a matter of equity, particularly for commercial ratepayers, who are the main beneficiaries under the scheme. There is much to be said for people knowing that they will have this help for the remainder of the quinquennium, because uncertainty will leave them contemplating potential increases in rating bills of perhaps £10,000.

The Parliament Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): How does the hon. Gentleman think that the amendment would achieve the purpose that he has described?

Mr. Dewar: The amendment would place a duty on the Secretary of State——

Mr. Ancram: Answer my question.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister will have an opportunity shortly to put his case, and, as is often the case with Opposition amendments, he may have some clever points to make. He may try to defeat it on the grounds that his lawyers and back-room boys have come up with interesting points on how it would fail to achieve the purpose that I have described. I am led to believe that that will be the case as I see the Minister examining a carefully typed script.

There may be something wrong with the drafting of the amendment. If the Minister accepts it in principle and promises to introduce an amendment in another place to give effect to what we have in mind, I will willingly withdraw it. But if the Government will not give a guarantee that they are committed to the principle of maintaining this situation throughout the quinquennium, we shall mark our view on the matter. That is why we wish to place a statutory duty on the Secretary of State to continue the system for the remainder of the quinquennium.

As I said at the outset, we are discussing a simple issue. The amendment, which would be supported by the general body of ratepayers in Scotland, should be accepted by the Minister.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I support the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). Many people in Edinburgh will benefit from the Government's concession. This is the first opportunity that I have had in the House to welcome the concession. I welcome the Government's action in providing for ratepayers at the extreme end of the spectrum in terms of revaluation. Unfortunately, however, the concession does not go far enough.

It is crucial for the people of Edinburgh to know that this protection, limited though it is, will be maintained for some years to come, because we must raise local authority expenditure in Edinburgh to levels more comparable with those of other authorities. Our services in Edinburgh—our recreational assets, housing and so on—have been screwed down intolerably and have been allowed to deteriorate in recent years to an extent which may be unique in Scotland. Indeed, that is the basis of the present confrontation with the Government, who are intent on imposing a Tory budget on the majority Labour council in Edinburgh.

Edinburgh's services and general standards will be raised sooner or later. I believe that that will happen sooner, even before Labour wins the general election in two or three years from now. As my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden pointed out, we must consider the period between now and the end of the revaluation period. That is why it is important to know that this concession, which does not go anywhere near far enough—it is a blunt instrument and is no alternative to the real solution, which is reversing successive Government cuts in local government expenditure—will continue to the end of the quinquennium.

I do not expect the Minister to show sympathy or understanding for the plight of the people of Edinburgh, who have suffered under Tory rule in recent years. I hope, however, that he will at least respond on the narrow issue of the future protection which hard-hit ratepayers would obtain as a result of the amendment.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): This is a tempting amendment. I listened with interest to what was said about it by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang). My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will, I hope, confirm that neither the amendment nor the clause will affect my constituents, many of whom will be registering appeals against the new valuations. My hon. Friend will be aware, as he has received all the papers, that I have carried out a detailed study of the matter. The study shows clearly that many of my constituents will be successful in their appeals. The question is how long it will be before decisions on those appeals are reached.

The Bill will to some extent mitigate hardship this year, and we are grateful for that help, but appeal decisions may not be reached until next year. That is causing considerable concern, particularly in Angus. Expenditure in Angus has never been at a very high level, nor, for that matter, has it been very high in Perth and Kinross. The expenditure programmes of these authorities have been very carefully worked out. The changes that have taken place, particularly in Angus, are the direct result of the revaluation anomalies. Therefore the Opposition amendment is tantalising and I look forward to hearing what my hon. Friend has to say about it.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): May I follow up the point made by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). Some small businesses will look at this package and think that it will solve their problems, but eventually they will find that it has solved their problems only for this year. The very large rate increases that they fear will still apply next year, unless the Government enter into a commitment to continue the present arrangement. If small businesses do not realise this and do not lodge an appeal this year, they will find that next year it is too late. Either the Government must be prepared to continue this arrangement or, if they are unable to make that commitment, they must use their good offices to ensure that people appeal against the valuation if they believe that it is too high. We have heard of circumstances in which people might be persuaded not to appeal because they are to receive the full benefit of the adjustment this year—an almost exact adjustment in terms of their valuation. However, the consequence is that next year they will suffer.

Although we welcome this measure in principle, it could be just a way of execution. If the Government are not prepared to accept in principle the amendment of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) they should at least make it clear that they intend to continue the arrangement, if they possibly can, and that people should appeal, regardless of the present arrangement, in order not to forfeit their right to future adjustments.

5.45 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth If my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State is not prepared to accept this amendment, I hope that, having embarked upon a scheme for providing relief for small business men, he at least

[Mr. Michael Forsyth]

recognises that it is essential for any small business to know what its position in future years will be and to be given at least some indication of its likely overheads. Just as the principle which guided his hand in introducing this Bill was the nature of the uncertainty and the nature of the impact on cash flows of a sudden and unexpected rates increase, so, equally, I ask my hon. Friend to recognise that businesses will be looking for certainty.

I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to say whether this scheme is expected to continue. My constituents would prefer to know now whether they will receive no relief next year rather than to be faced with a nasty surprise later. If my hon. Friend is not prepared to accept this amendment, which would be binding upon him, it is important that he should say what is to happen next year.

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): The Committee is indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) for moving this amendment. I have to admit that even after 20 years as a Member of Parliament I do not know the difference between "shall" and "may", but I do not suppose that is a matter of fundamental importance in terms of the information that we are trying to obtain from the Minister. It is accepted generally that annual provision is now made for the relief of domestic ratepayers. As relief for commercial ratepayers is to be introduced, it ought to be possible to assume that annual relief will be provided for them, too.

The Government have been rushed into introducing this legislation. I do not know whether businesses which will go out of existence unless relief is provided for them this year will be able to continue in business if relief is not provided for them next year. I hope that the Minister can provide information about what prompted the Government to introduce this measure. Were they prompted to introduce it because of genuine hardship and because it was suspected that without relief certain businesses would go out of existence, or were other factors involved?

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) is making a very important point which must be discussed. The evidence I have submitted to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State includes evidence which shows clearly that in the past five years the net profits realised by businesses were less than the increase in rates that they will be forced to pay. There is no way, therefore, in which those firms could remain in business and be viable.

Mr. Brown: As upholders of the capitalist private enterprise system, perhaps they should not be in business. I do not have access to the information held by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), but the Government should be in possession of this information by now. I am assuming that the Government have been given a great deal of evidence about businesses that have suffered rates increases that are so savage that they will have to go out of business because the increases are greater than their profits.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): That is true not only in the commercial sector which the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) is delighted to support. Those who are engaged in the teaching profession in my constituency will receive no relief under the Bill because their rates increases are not sufficiently large, but the increase in their rates will be higher than the increase in salary that this Government are prepared to concede.

Mr. Brown: I do not intend to follow up that point. It goes a little wide of the amendment. I should be grateful if the Under-Secretary of State would provide the information that I seek. I should be grateful for evidence upon which the change for this year is based so that we may judge whether such a change would be desirable next year and in subsequent years.

If the Minister cannot or will not say, can we assume that it is because there is some possibility of totally abolishing liability in the commercial sector? Is that part of the review now being undertaken, and is that why he cannot say what might or might not happen next year?

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is to be congratulated on his gallant effort to attack the Government on their future intentions towards the scheme. But whether the amendment is effective is neither here nor there. After all, a principle is at issue. The Government have been bounced into producing this scheme for good reasons that are partly political but partly due to the howls of discontent that have come from the commercial sector.

If the Government propose to make use of the scheme only for this year, there will be substantial problems next year, and the Government will have succeeded only in buying time for a year. However, they will have left a time bomb ticking away, and that could have deleterious consequences for small business men. Indeed, the Government owe it to the Committee to come clean and to say whether they intend to continue the scheme. If so, that will come as some relief to those in the commercial sector. It would also help if the Government could say whether, if they intend to continue it, they will also want a tapering effect so that the scheme will disappear during the current quinquennium or when the Government have produced an alternative scheme for financing local government.

If the Government proceed with their local government fund-raising reforms, they may well apply them to the domestic sector while leaving the commercial and industrial sectors untouched. If so, that is all the more reason why the bad effects of this revaluation should be diluted by the Government over a period .

In practice, the Government will not get many thanks from the commercial sector next year when the rates bills come tumbling in. People's memories can be very fitful, and although the Government may get some thanks for the relief that they are giving this year, they will run into a tirade of anger and abuse, such as they have had this year, if they fail to follow through with a coherent and consistent system to give aid to the commercial sector. The Government should come clean this afternoon and tell us exactly what they have in mind. It may not be possible to specify figures, but it is important that they should give some information about their future intentions.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian) *rose*——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): Mr. George Home Robertson.

Mr. Home Robertson: I think, Sir Paul, that you have just called a composite hon. Member, but on this occasion I shall, if I may, take precedence over my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

The amendment seems to be attracting quite widespread support, and I think that all those who have spoken have supported the spirit of it. Consequently, we all look forward to what the Minister will have to say about it. I feel that the amendment is right, because I do not want to give the present Secretary of State for Scotland any additional discretion. He is always only too willing to impose constraints of every kind on local authorities, yet when he wants to stick his nose in and to take direct action in the affairs of local authorities, he wants those powers to be purely discretionary.

There seems to be a manifest need for this relief not only this year but in succeeding years, and Parliament should therefore legislate accordingly. Incidentally, some of the constraints that the Secretary of State has imposed on local authorities in recent years have probably led him into this very morass. It is his actions in cutting rate support grant year after year that have put so many ratepayers in Scotland in such a parlous situation that the Government have been forced, through political pressure, to respond in this way. All hon. Members must recognise the dificulties that the Government have imposed on ratepayers and must be concerned about it. We must seek ways of alleviating the problems of ratepayers while at the same time preserving the quality of essential local authority services for those whom we represent.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): The Bill will considerably help those whose valuations have increased threefold or more, but is it not true that for the great majority of ratepayers in Scotland, and particularly in Fife, the spending policies of local authorities have had more to do with increased rate bills than any revaluation?

Mr. Home Robertson: I do not have detailed figures at my fingertips, but I suspect that the hon. Gentleman's statement is inaccurate. If my part of the world is anything to go by, the rate increases imposed in recent years are related far more directly to cuts in the rate support grant than to anything that local authorities may have done. For example, in my constituency East Lothian district council has reduced the rate-borne element of its expediture in the current year, but as a result of the latest round of rate support grant cuts, the rates have nevertheless been forced up. The hon. Gentleman could not ask for a clearer example than that.

There is a case for this formula, flawed as it may be. But if it holds good for this year, it must also hold good for next year and the succeeding years. If there are anomalies and problems this year, those same problems will exist next year and the year after that. The Government may think that they have bought off Sir James Goold and all the others who have been making such a noise in recent months. Indeed, it may well be that this sum that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been prepared to cough up as a one-off contribution can buy a little peace and quiet for Conservative Members this year. However, questions flow from that, to which we shall no doubt return. First, is that full £50 million actually going to be disbursed through this mechanism? Perhaps we should press the Government further on that.

However, the problem will be with us next year. Far be it from me to express too much concern about the future of Conservative Members, but yesterday I saw a prediction that was based on figures from recent opinion polls, which showed that only nine Conservative Members of Parliament for Scotland were likely to be elected at the next general election.

Mr. McQuarrie: On a point of order, Sir Paul. We are debating amendment No. 1, which was selected by Mr. Speaker. With the greatest respect I think that the hon. Gentleman has drifted away from it.

The Second Deputy Chairman: I have been listening carefully to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) and I hope that he was making no more than an incidental reference.

Mr. Home Robertson: I was trying to help the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), as he is not one of the nine Conservative Members who is likely to survive. However, if "shall" was substituted for "may", he might have a better chance——

Mr. McQuarrie: What about reselection?

Mr. Home Robertson: I have been reselected, but I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has been. Indeed, it is interesting to note that the Secretary of State and the Minister could be casualties if they do not get the formula right. Even if they do not accept the obvious merits of the case for getting this business right now, perhaps they will accept them in the interests of self-preservation.

6 pm

Mr. Foulkes: It is a great pleasure to follow my honourable and patrician Friend the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on this matter.

I found the concern of the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) for his constituents who have been affected very touching, especially as I have been reading reports — no doubt untrue — that because of the MORI poll findings he is looking for a seat in another part of the United Kingdom, unlike the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) who will fight to the bitter end in his area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I cannot imagine the source of those reports. I should be grateful to know where the hon. Gentleman read them.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. There is nothing to do with polls in the amendment. We must stick to the amendment.

Mr. Foulkes: It is interesting to note that the hon. Member for Stirling did not deny the reports. However, I shall change my tone because I am not a controversial person, as hon. Members know.

I thank the Minister for receiving a deputation earlier today, which I led, on behalf of the co-operative movement in Scotland. I declare my interest as a sponsored Co-operative Member. The Minister received the deputation with the greatest courtesy. He listened carefully to what was said and was diligent in answering our points.

The representatives argued strongly on a point that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) argued cogently when he moved the amendment

[Mr. Foulkes]

—that help should be continued in successive years. The representatives warned the Minister—I think that he took the point because they mentioned stores in his constituency—that societies such as Scotmid co-op are having seriously to consider closing stores. It will interest my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) to know that one store that may be closed is a modern supermarket in Granton, which was opened only a few years ago when I was on the board of the St. Cuthbert's co-op.

The representatives argued strongly for the continuation of this help to try to alleviate—and it is only a small alleviation—the problem. I do not think that it is improper to quote the Minister because he made his remarks in public. He said that the question of continuation would be considered in the autumn when such matters were generally reviewed.

I want to put some questions to the Minister. If the answers are outside his prepared text, I hope that he will deviate from it and answer them. It would be even better if he did not have a prepared text. In the discussions in the autumn, what will be his view and that of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland? Will they fight for a continuation of help? The House would like to know, as would the commercial ratepayers of Scotland. What will the Scottish Office do?

My second question is the most important: what will be the basis of any decision? What will be the criteron for continuing the help in future years? Will it depend on whether the money is made available? Will it depend on whether that money can be prised out of the Chancellor? I used that phrase when I met the Minister earlier today. Will it be based on the current year's experience? If there is any shortfall this year, will it be carried over to next year?

My hon. Friends and I suspect that the decision will be based on whether the heat has gone off the Government—whether Sir James Goold has forgotten about it and is not jumping up and down. Indeed, by then he might be Lord Goold. That is the traditional way of buying off people. Will the Government wait to test the temperature at the run-up to the next party conference? We need to know the criteria for the decision. I hope that the Minister can answer those genuine, serious and, I hope, to some extent, intelligent questions.

Mr. Maxton: When I listened to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), I was slightly undecided whether to support the amendment. From a political point of view, the amendment is pure altruism on our part. We have discussed what will happen to Conservative Members if the money is not continued in successive years. If it is not continued next year, when the Conservative party faces the regional elections in 1986, it will find that the ratepayers of Scotland are yet again up in arms against it.

I am tempted to say that I welcome that prospect because, unlike most of my hon. Friends, I have two Conservative regional councillors in my constituency. Of course, we shall take both those seats at the next election, but it would be much easier if the ratepayers of Newlands were up in arms against the Conservative Government.

However, I shall prove my altruism by giving my support to the amendment. Although it may not be the most beneficial action for the Labour party in Scotland, it is certainly beneficial for Scottish ratepayers.

I want to take issue with the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) about his intervention in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden. He sugggested that next year the problem might be solved through the rate support grant rather than by continuing the rebate system. We would object strongly to that because that could be achieved only by a cut in the services provided by local authorities. Conservative Members keep saying that local authorities are overspending. They should come to my constituency and see the deterioration in housing, in cleansing and in other services provided by the local authority. They could not then say that the increases are down to high-spending authorities. That is nonsense.

The intervention by the hon. Member for Stirling was surprising. I assume that he still thinks that local authorities that he believes are overspending—including his local authority, Stirling district council—should be hit and receive less rate support grant than those authorities that he believes to be good authorities. If the Government were to adopt his scheme, his constituents who are paying high increases in their rates will not benefit next year because, presumably, the rate support grant will be cut. However, the constituents of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) may benefit because they have a good local authority that does not overspend.

I do not know what the hon. Gentleman thinks may be the solution. The rebate scheme is for the benefit of all ratepayers, no matter which local authority serves them. Surely that is what the hon. Gentleman wants, rather than using the rate support grant.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Those of my constituents who suffered an increase in rateable value of more than three times would still benefit because the money would be available. The point about a reduction in rate support grant is perfectly apparent, and I am glad to have the hon. Gentleman's confirmation of that. The cuts in the RSG in Stirling district and Central region came about because those authorities decided to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on striking miners and other political causes. The cuts in rate support grant are a result of their spending decisions, which will no doubt be reflected in my constituency in the regional and district council elections.

Mr. Maxton: It is obvious that the hon. Gentleman does not listen. I am not supporting cuts in rate support grant for Stirling district council. It has spent money on families of miners in desperate need, not on miners themselves, and many other local authorities rightly spent money in that way. Stirling district council should not have a cut in its rate support grant, but the hon. Gentleman thinks that it should. He said to my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden that his constituency would suffer because of his Government's policies.

This scheme is fair and should be continued for the full five years of the revaluation period so that there is not a sudden dramatic increase in the rates. So far, we have not heard whether the Government will concede that point. We heard nothing from the Secretary of State when he made his statement or on Second Reading when the point was pressed. Today, no guarantee has been given that the scheme will continue. It will be interesting to see whether the Minister will give one.

If no guarantee is given, we shall have to say that the money was given this year for purely political purposes, and not with any real regard for ratepayers in Scotland. I am waiting with interest to hear what the Minister has to say.

Mr. Ancram: I am sure that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was greatly relieved to hear that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) is to support the amendment, because not only is the hon. Member for Cathcart the Scottish Whip, upon whom the hon. Member for Garscadden depends to ensure that his troops do as they are told, but the hon. Member for Cathcart's name is on the amendment. Therefore, the House has the right to presume that he believed in what the hon. Member for Garscadden was saying.

For a moment, I wondered whether the hon. Member for Garscadden was having the same trouble as I had of not quite understanding what the amendment is meant to do, but that might be a minor matter. I ask that question out of interest because I wished to understand the amendment. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman took it the wrong way and did not give me any answer, but perhaps he will consider doing so.

We have had a fairly wide-ranging debate. I always listen with interest to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). He spoke about people moving round looking for constituencies, but I remember his travels round Scotland before he finally settled in Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley. Both he and the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) referred to polls. Given your strictures, Sir Paul, I shall not mention them, except to say that we heard precisely the same speech in precisely the same terms in 1981, but in 1983 some of the predictions made by Labour Members lay rather heavily upon them.

Mr. Foulkes: I am sure that the Minister will confirm that, once I found a constituency where the people wanted and elected me, I stayed there, and I shall continue to stay there. The Minister will recall that he used to represent another part of the country, but, when it gave him leave of absence, he flew elsewhere. However, we should get on to the subject rather than dwell on these political points.

Mr. Ancram: I agree. I merely regret that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley is no longer a constituent of mine, living in the nice, splendid and expensive house in which he used to live in my constituency.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) spoke about appeals. In this connection it is important to reiterate what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said on Monday—that the Bill does not alter or affect valuations. If there are unfair valuations, or valuations that the ratepayers believe to be unfair, they should take advantage of the appeals procedure, because it is only through that that we can alter revaluations.

6.15 pm

As to the effect of appeals, some may take longer than it takes to bring the scheme into effect. I suspect that that will happen in the majority of cases. The scheme will relate to the valuations as at this time. If there is a successful appeal and a valuation is reduced below the three times multiplier, that case will fall out of the scheme in the future, and, if any adjustments are required to be made, they will be made at that time.

Mr. William McElvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Will any repayment to the Secretary of State for Scotland be required from someone who has benefited from the scheme?

Mr. Ancram: In particular circumstances adjustments may need to be made. That will depend on the time at which the appeal takes place and on the time that the valuation is changed.

Mr. Dewar: I am sure that I am on the same point as my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey). If a ratepayer is paying in 10 monthly instalments, the first instalment of which is due in May, on the assumption that he has an appeal pending—unfortunately, valuation appeals take a long time to resolve—he may have had the benefit of the rebate on several instalments already paid. If at a later date he succeeds with his appeal, for unpaid instalments he would not have a rebate. However, would he have to pay back any money to the Secretary of State for a rebate to which he was not entitled earlier?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman is talking about the same matter as I was in speaking of adjustments that might have to be made. This matter will be dealt with in the draft order. Adjustments will be made as a result of an appeal where the appeal has brought the valuation down below the three times multiplier. In effect, we would seek to ensure that no one unfairly benefits from the scheme. Therefore, where he has, in effect, been rebated, because of the success of his appeal he would have to make a payment back or an adjustment in some other way.

The various ways and timings under which this can arise do not allow for a simple answer. The important point, which I reiterate, is that ratepayers should not think that, just because they qualify for relief, they do not need to appeal if they have an unfair valuation.

Mr. Hugh Brown: The Minister seems to have confused me, if not the rest of the Committee. Is he saying that timing has something to do with when the decision on the appeal is made? I cannot understand the logic of this. If someone qualifies now under the Bill, and if there is a reduction in the rateable value on appeal, why should he not have his entitlement? Is the Minister trying to fudge that point, or does he not understand it?

Mr. Ancram: I understand the point, and I think that the hon. Gentleman will find, when the draft order is published, that it is covered. Where, after a rebate has been granted by the rating authority, any alteration is made in the rate value or in the pre-revaluation rateable value or in the revaluation rateable value itself—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman asked for a clear answer, and if he will let me finish my sentence, he may learn something—the grant of the rebate and the calculation of any such rebate would have to be determined anew, and the amount of any rebate already paid or allowed or of any rebate or balance thereof found to be due should be paid or allowed or repaid to the rating authority accordingly. There is no simple or clear way of dealing with this. The general effect that we are trying to achieve is that where someone has benefited, but because of an appeal does not require to have benefited and has actually made a surplus, a repayment would have to be made.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): I understand what the Minister has said. Would he go as far as the

[Mr. Jim Craigen]

National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses in saying that all applicants for relief must have lodged a formal appeal against the valuation?

Mr. Ancram: I would not go that far, and I am sure that on consideration neither would the hon. Member. What that suggests is that people who may well have a multiplier of more than 3, but who feel that the assessor's valuation is correct and who would therefore have no grounds for appeal, would be required at their own expense to make appeals to qualify for a rebate. I am sure that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) would not consider that sensible, in terms either of administering the scheme and trying to make sure that the appeal procedure is not bogged down or of the financial interests of those who were to undertake that course. I take it from the fact that the hon. Gentleman is nodding, however gently, that he appreciates that that would cause chaos and achieve no useful purpose.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I am worried about this. Let us take three cases: a person who has a multiplier of more than 3 who does not apply for any rebate; a person with a multiplier of more than 3 who applies for a rebate, who appeals and whose appeal is granted some time; and a person with a multiplier of more than 3 who appeals unsuccessfully and gets a rebate. What is the system under which these rebates are to be granted? Will one person have to repay? If ever there was an idiocy of a system, those three indications give it.

Mr. Ancram: The first case would not arise. Those eligible will be identified by the rating authority. They will be notified, and rebates will be paid where they are due. Therefore, there will be no question of someone qualifying, but not applying. If the rating authority leaves out someone, it is our intention that that person should be entitled to point out to the rating authority that he has been left out. There would be an application only in that sense.

In regard to the other two cases, in any scheme where relief is granted — not necesssarily by a successful appeal—and the ratepayer benefits overly, adjustments and repayments may have to be made. That may be done not by repayment but by adjusting the amount required to be paid over the rest of the year. I go back to what I said earlier to the hon. Member for Garcadden. The precise way in which adjustments would be made would depend on the circumstances and timing of the appeal.

Mr. Dewar: Another slight complication could arise. If someone is appealing, there is a statutory disregard which is a certain percentage of the increase. Presumably that would become an adjustment and would be called into play in the final reckoning. I cannot remember what the percentage is. Perhaps the Minister would remind me and explain how that would fit into the complicated scenario that he is outlining.

Mr. Ancram: I do not think it is a complicated scenario. It may be complicated in how it has to be phrased within the order, but the principle behind it is very simple. The figure is 10 per cent. In balancing the effects of a successful appeal, that would have to be taken into consideration to reach a fair result. In the case of those who have benefited but who do not require to have benefited because they have appealed successfully, an adjustment may have to be made. I am sure that principle would be agreed by both sides of the Committee.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) referred to expenditure in Edinburgh—a matter that we should probably not be debating in Committee. However, there is one relevant point to which I must reply. The spending decisions of Edinburgh district have increased the district rate by 80 per cent. In terms of the figures produced by the administration, that accounts for a considerable amount of the rate increases facing both domestic and commercial ratepayers in Edinburgh. In view of the concern displayed not only by the hon. Member for Garscadden but by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East, I hope that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East will support the Government in their attempts to persuade that district authority to reduce expenditure and to return money to the ratepayers.

Mr. Strang: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the manner in which he made the point. I know that we cannot dwell on this at length, but if the Under-Secretary were to accompany me around my constituency he would see the dereliction and deprivation that exist because of the low level of provision by Edinburgh council over the years. He knows the position. There is no housing support grant; there is only a trivial contribution from the rates to the housing revenue account; and there is a very low level of expenditure on recreation compared with what is spent by some Tory authorities. We must be able to tackle the problems in Edinburgh. It is wrong for the Under-Secretary to suggest that I am not supporting the council in beginning to tackle them.

Mr. Ancram: We shall have other occasions in coming months to debate those matters. I do not wish to debate them in the context of this Bill. If the hon. Gentleman is concerned about the ratepayers and the effects of rates on businesses, I find it hard to appreciate that he is content to see an 80 per cent. increase in the district rate merely to meet the expenditure decisions of Edinburgh district council.

The main point raised by the hon. Member for Garscadden was dealt with in a sense on Second Reading on Monday when both my right hon. Friend and I attempted to make clear that decisions as to future years are taken properly in the autumn of the year preceding the year in which they are to be effective. Decisions on rate support grant and on the domestic relief element of the rate support grant are taken then. I do not think that the hon. Member for Garscadden or the Committee could expect me to pre-empt those decisions. Hon. Members should not attempt to draw me into giving commitments about figures or any other details.

It was made clear on Monday, and I reiterate today, that the Bill is drafted as an enabling measure. By use of an order or regulations, it can be applied in any year. As I said on Monday, we intend to introduce the order relating to the current year as soon as the Bill has Royal Assent. We are entitled so to do.

Going back to what my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North said, there is nothing in the Bill to prevent the Secretary of State, if he so decides when he takes these decisions in the autumn, from providing relief in future years. That is an important and fundamental part of the Bill. I hope that my hon. Friends will accept that the

Secretary of State has the power. He has had other powers to help ratepayers in the past and he has used them. We have shown our concern for Scottish ratepayers, but the Bill provides the proper way, and I hope that my hon. Friends will accept it.

6.30 pm

Mr. Foulkes: The Committee knows that the Bill gives the Secretary of State that power. Will the Minister answer my question: what criteria will be used and on what basis will the decision be made to continue the provision in future years?

Mr. Ancram: The decisions are taken in the autumn in the light of current circumstances. Relief to ratepayers is examined on an annual basis and decisions are announced in due course to Parliament. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) said, businesses should have some idea of what is to happen. We shall let ratepayers know of our intentions in good time, as we do about other elements of the rate bill each year.

Mr. Craigen: The Minister says that he wants to let ratepayers know in good time. The closing date for appeals against valuation will be September. Is the Minister saying that he will announce his decision in October? If so, people who have put in an appeal will not have had the opportunity to examine his decision.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Member for Maryhill is muddling two matters. The appeal will be to reduce a valuation. Those who feel that their valuations are unfair should appeal. The Bill does nothing to alter valuations, so the closing date for appeals has nothing to do with the argument.

I tell my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling that businesses will have some idea of the burdens that they are likely to face because we intend to make the decision as soon as possible, consistent with the timetable that I have outlined. They will have some warning of their position in future years.

Mr. Fairbairn: I should like to be clear about two matters. First, I assume that there will be no appeal against any assessment of abatement or non-abatement under the ordinary rating valuation procedures. Secondly, when the scheme is started, should I assume that, however unjust any part of the scheme is thought to be, we must vote for the whole or against the whole?

Mr. Ancram: My hon. and learned Friend will see from the face of the Bill that the regulations come under the affirmative procedure.

Mr. Fairbairn: So the answer is yes.

Mr. Ancram: The answer is yes. I understand that my hon. and learned Friend was referring to appeals by those who feel that they should have received relief but have not. The normal type of appeal applies to the Court of Session. The hon. Member for Garscadden laughs, but he got the answer right. He appears to find that humorous.

We want to maintain a degree of discretion and flexibility for future years by giving the Secretary of State the power, year to year, to make regulations which can provide relief under the Bill.

Opposition Members seem suddenly to have a tremendous desire to promote relief schemes for commercial ratepayers, particularly in the long term. I recall that in 1978, when the last revaluation took place, when the Labour party was in government and the commercial sector was disadvantaged, the differential between the average multiplier and the commercial multiplier was greater than it is today. There was no sign then of promoting schemes to help the commercial or domestic ratepayers who were most severely hit. The only reaction of the Labour Government to the plight of domestic and commercial ratepayers was to reduce domestic relief by about 75 per cent.

We are grateful to Opposition Members for supporting the scheme, but some of their enthusiasm owes more to the politics of the situation than to a deep concern for the ratepayers.

The Bill provides a system which will not only help ratepayers this year, but is capable of providing help in future years, if required. I ask my hon. Friends to reject the amendment which does not achieve what the hon. Member for Garscadden wishes it to achieve. In many ways it does not make sense. If the hon. Member for Garscadden wishes to press the amendment to a Division, I ask my hon. Friends to reject it.

Mr. Dewar: I confess that the look of pain upon the face of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) as the Minister smoothly referred to an appeal to the Court of Session as a normal appeal lightened my afternoon.

I intend to press the amendment to a Division and I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will support me. If we carry the day the other place might have to do some tidying up, but I imagine that that can be done with ease if the view of the Committee is clearly established. I wish to press the amendment because it has all-party support. We agree that certainty is a virtue and that equity demands that the Government make it clear that they intend to carry the aid throughout the remainder of the quinquennium.

It is not good enough for the Minister to stand at the Dispatch Box with no supporting argument, detail or explanation and to say that the Government will take a decision in the autumn. He did not try to answer my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) about the criteria.

There is a good reason why we should expect the scheme to continue. I accept that the domestic element is different because that applies to all domestic ratepayers. In that sense we are talking about an omnibus provision. Whether the domestic element should apply might be a matter to be considered according to the circumstances in October. However, the proposed form of rebate is an attempt to equalise or at least to reduce the discrepancies within a particular category. Nothing that happens in October will change that picture. The valuation roll in October will be exactly the same as the present valuation roll. If it is offensive—we gather that the Government rightly think that it is offensive—and inequitable that certain people should suddenly see an enormous gap opening up between their rateable value and the rateable values of other people, that gap will still be there in October. No change of circumstance will affect that situation.

If that is the injustice with which the Bill is dealing, it is an injustice which by definition will continue throughout the quinquennium, and there can be no reason for refusing to give an undertaking that at least in principle this help will be continued. If there were some caveat about the

[Mr. Dewar]

level, we might be prepared to listen to that, but at least but there should be an undertaking that the discrepancies that will still exist will be dealt with as set out in the scheme.

Therefore, it seems to me clear, logical and entirely consistent that we should express our displeasure at the totally inadequate response of the Minister, and invite the Committee to divide.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

Division No. 227] **[6.40 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foulkes, George
Freud, Clement
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. James Hamilton.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Blackburn, John
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Irving, Charles
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan

Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Bruce: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 13, leave out '3' and insert '2·5'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 3, in page 1, line 13, after 'value', insert

'or such other figure as shall be set by statutory instrument which shall not have effect until approved by resolution of the Commons House of Parliament'.

No. 4, in page 2, line 11, at end insert—

'(3A) Where at any time it appears to the Secretary of State that the expenditure for rebate under this section will not reach the sum of £50 million for which provision is made, he may by order reduce the multiples set at 3 under subsection (2) hereof so as to ensure that the said sum is utilised.'.

Mr. Bruce: The purpose of the amendment is self-evident. It is to ensure that the relief gets to the people who need it most. That has been the intention behind all the amendments tabled by Liberal Members.

It has emerged from our debates so far that no one seems to have accurate figures. The Under-Secretary of State made some play of the fact that at the time that the Liberal party was campaigning for exactly this kind of relief package we were asking for only about £4 million. He knows that that criticism of us was as much a criticism of the Scottish Federation on Small Businesses and Self Employed which had assessment information available to it that that is what would be required—*[Interruption.]* It has emerged since that such organisations as the Liberal party and the federation, without the aid of computers, are no more inaccurate than the Government, who have the aid of computers—*[Interruption.]* The braying of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) is a matter that I may come to later.

The Minister is aware that the figure of £50 million was not the first-aid relief of Mafeking, as was suggested at the Tory party conference, and a definitive figure produced by the Scottish Office on the basis of a detailed analysis. It appears now that it was at best a guess that it was hoped would cover the requirement, and that it was a generous guess. We are not ungrateful that the Scottish Office managed to squeeze a generous sum of money out of the Treasury. However, we want to ensure that the money is used for the purpose for which it was intended and that those who need the relief most will get it.

Regrettably, the Government's cut-off point of three times the increase in net annual value means that many people who need the relief will not get it. I have received a number of representations from people who face very considerable increases in their rates bills and will qualify for no relief.

I quote the example of someone living in Newmachar, just outside the city of Aberdeen, who faces a 288 per cent. increase in rateable value and an increase of 26·2 per cent. in the rates that he must pay. He asks me to make representations to the Government to give him relief from that. The Government are pushing through this Bill which will give him no relief. He will have to pay the full increase.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) spoke earlier of a comparison with teachers. I can assure the Minister that it is not lost on teachers who are also ratepayers that they face rate increases of 25 per cent. or 30 per cent. in circumstances where at the moment they are getting no salary increase and what the Government are offering them will not cover their rates bills.

One of my constituents lives in Ellon in a house which may have been sold to him by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan. He faces an increase in his rateable value from £457 to £1,247. That is 273 per cent. The increased cash payment that he must make is 30 per cent. He, too, will get no relief under the terms of the Bill, and nothing that I or the Minister can tell him will make him feel very well disposed to the circumstances in which he finds himself.

The third example that I quote is that of someone living in Bridge of Don who is asked to find an additional £250. My calculation is that that might be reduced to £220, and he points out that that is just £30 less than the rates bill that Balmoral castle will have to find, which suggests that living in a big house in the country may be cheaper than living in a small house in a town.

I hope that those examples demonstrate to the Committee that the cut-off point that the Government are applying means that many people who, understandably, are incensed by their increased rates bills and worried about how to find the means to pay them are to get no relief.

It could be argued that the 2·5 suggested in the amendment did not go far enough but not that it went too far. I accept that, because it was essentially a compromise based on my understanding of the kind of shortfall that might be available and the intention to concentrate the money available a little closer on the people who needed relief.

On more than one occasion the Minister has implied that I, as distinct from my colleagues, did not appreciate the Government's offer of help. He knows that my colleagues and I have campaigned hard for a first-aid package. At a press conference in Edinburgh on 9 May, before the Government's announcement, I said that I thought that the relief necessary would be of the order of tens of millions of pounds because it was apparent to me that the figures would be fairly substantial.

I welcome the Government's package, but I make two comments about it. The first is that the package is not concentrated hard enough where it is most needed. It is applied across the board, and many people will still have dramatic increases in their rate bills with no additional services, and relief for one year only. If we are talking about real politics, I can assure the Minister that those

[Mr. Bruce]

people will not be better disposed towards the Conservative party after the passage of the Bill than they were before. They will be looking for more help than they have had to date. The Government will have to restore some of the rate support grant to local authorities next year to enable them to cushion their ratepayers.

Mr. Henderson: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the Government's introduction of the Bill demonstrates a warped sense of priorities, surely by this amendment he is seeking to warp the priorities even more. Is not that curious? Would it not be less necessary if Liberal councillors on Fife regional council had voted against expenditure policies exceeding the Government's guidelines put forward by the Conservative members of that council?

Mr. Bruce: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's constituents are well aware of the value of having Liberals on the local council, which is probably why about the safest Conservative seat on the district council is now in Liberal hands. That suggests that when people have Liberal councillors they appreciate them and elect more of them, as no doubt they will in other parts of the country.

On the question of warped priorities, I freely admit that I might have chosen my words better in response to the statement. Let me therefore make my point clear. The Government managed to find £50 million of new money. It was not scientifically calculated, but a figure that they thought would be adequate.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): It was not calculated at all.

7 pm

Mr. Bruce: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman on that.

Secondly, the Government rightly recognised that the money was necessary and managed to find it, having told us that there was no new money available for other priorities in the Scottish economy, such as investment in education. The Government are not going far enough. If they can find £50 million for ratepayers, they should be able to do so for teachers. I assure Conservative Members that my constituents recognise, as the Committee will recognise, that the Government's priorities are peculiar to them. They do not accord with what many people believe, that is, that we should be protected from these ridiculous rate increases, which have been brought about as much by cuts in Government rate support grant as by revaluation, and that the Government should invest in other priority services, such as education. It is valid to make the point that if the Government can find money for rates, they can find it for education.

I have attended meetings in my constituency, which were extremely well attended by ratepayers, who will now campaign consistently for a restoration of justice within local government finance to enable local authorities to operate effectively and to carry out what they should do with proper support from central Government, which they are not receiving at present. Those people recognise the true colour of the Government's priorities.

The Minister should acknowledge that the £50 million was not calculated scientifically, that its application is not getting it through to those who most need it, and that some people who face substantial rate increases will not be helped by the legislation.

The amendment would lower the threshold and give more people assistance. To quote the hon. Member for Cathcart, the political altruism of my party is that the amendment may help some of the Minister's disaffected supporters, who are outraged and no doubt wrote to him about the iniquities of the rating system, to feel that the Bill will benefit them, which it does not do as it stands. I would have thought, therefore, that Conservative Members would be anxious to ensure that the relief is spread as widely and among as many ratepayers as possible. To lower the threshold would achieve that end. It must be desirable both for general equity and, indeed, for Conservative Members in marginal constituencies.

Mr. Dewar: As three amendments are grouped together, it may be helpful if I speak to amendment No. 3 in my name and the names of my hon. Friends.

We are dealing with the same point as that raised by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce)—the mystery of the £50 million. The headlines told us that the Government had found £50 million, which was new money and would be used to help Scottish ratepayers. When the Prime Minister spoke at Perth about the commercial element in the package, she went out of her way to say that the scheme would cost "£40 million, at least." A great deal of political credit was claimed for having produced that £50 million. We are making the straightforward point that the goods should be as advertised. If the package was £50 million, it should be used for relieving the burden of the rating system at the point where that system creates most pressure.

When the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) replied to the debate on Monday, he said of the scheme:

> "It is not easy to calculate how much that will cost, as hon. Members have realised. I believe that we shall not know the full answer to that question until all those who are eligible have been paid."—[*Official Report*, 3 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 112.]

That is a highly questionable statement.

I accept that there may be some play on the estimates and that we may have to come and go on the £29·5 million or £29·6 million which COSLA calculated. However, it is extraordinary that, during the preparation of the scheme, COSLA was not consulted. COSLA holds the computer records and has the capacity to identify those who will benefit and the amounts that will have to be paid to them. Its figures are likely to be accurate within a small tolerance. COSLA strongly suggests that the shortfall will be about £20 million.

In the debate the Secretary of State said:

> "While it looks as if the total cost should indeed be contained within the £50 million figure attached to the Bill and may be a bit less, it is not possible yet to be sure what it will amount to". —[*Official Report*, 3 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 66.]

We must make provision against the possibility — indeed, the strong likelihood — that COSLA's figures will be correct, and the suggestion that the sum may be a little less than £50 million is a euphemism. There appears to be a genuine danger that £20 million of the £50 million rescue operation will not be given to Scottish ratepayers, but will disappear into the ever-hungry maw of the Treasury.

I like amendment No. 3 because it allows a sensible degree of flexibility. It is a genuine attempt to help. The

hon. Member for Gordon fairly suggested—in the sense that it was a genuine suggestion—that we should bring more people into the ambit of the scheme. He suggests reducing the multiplier from 3 to 2·5. I cannot support that because it is too arbitrary a figure and too inflexible in its effect. I cannot say what would happen with a multiplier of 2·5, but COSLA has informally suggested to me that it would include an enormous number of people and that the £50 million would have to be increased many times. In a sense that is desirable, and I understand the temptation to do that. However, I have tabled an amendment which I genuinely hope the Government will accept, and Conservative Back-Bench Members will support.

Amendment No. 3 is much more modest than amendment No. 2. We are not demanding an arbitrary reduction; we are seeking, in case our suspicions turn out to be right and £20 million is to return to the Treasury and not spent as intended, to introduce a provision to give the Secretary of State the machinery to do something about the shortfall. When he has calculated at leisure how best to proceed by varying the multiplier or whatever, he may say, "I am sorry chaps, but I cannot do anything about the shortfall. I would have liked to, but the primary legislation was drawn in a way that did not allow it." For a long time he sheltered behind that proposition regarding the scheme itself. I am anxious to help by providing him with such a means, if it becomes clear that that is right because of the enormous shortfall caused by the present multiplier.

The amendment allows the multiplier to be varied by statutory instrument in the same way as the other details of the scheme. We are not being unreasonable; we are merely giving the Secretary of State a power. The amendment is permissive. We are allowing the Government to cope with what would be a sad let-down if the figures fall far short of the promised support.

Conservative members have already commented on the extremely limited impact of the scheme in their constituencies. The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) reported, sadly, on the disappointments for Bearsden. To some extent, I appear at the Dispatch Box as a penitent because in the early days of the scheme I suggested that the Eastwoods and Bearsdens would be the principal beneficiaries. That has not turned out to be true, and I concede that. The figures show a much wider scatter than I thought likely, although the level of help is marginal.

I discussed the figures with the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), the Under-Secretary. They were supplied to me by the finance division of Strathclyde region. I give them to the Committee because they are interesting. In Glasgow, for example, 11·95 per cent. of all domestic ratepayers will get some benefit, although probably marginal, from the scheme. In Eastwood, only 197 householders will qualify for assistance, which represents less than 1 per cent. of the domestic ratepayers in that area. There is a great contrast between Glasgow at almost 12 per cent. and Eastwood at 0·98 per cent. The total of £59,000 that will be available in Eastwood shows how marginal the assistance is.

It is interesting to note that, in Glasgow, 23 per cent. of non-domestic ratepayers will obtain some assistance from the scheme, whereas in Eastwood only 1·06 per cent., or 21 properties, will benefit. When the *Eastwood Gazette*, or whatever the local newspaper is called, gets its hands on those figures, the Under-Secretary of State may have an uncomfortable time explaining why there has been such a minimal impact in his area. In Argyll and Bute, which is represented by another Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, 1·35 per cent. of domestic ratepayers will be helped, compared with an average in Strathclyde of more than 6 per cent. That suggests that the help for Argyll and Bute will not be received with massive enthusiasm.

I make those points because I believe that the record should be put straight, and because I wish to underline the fact that, if the scheme is extended, it will be extremely popular in areas that are important to Ministers, especially Eastwood and Argyll and Bute. I have obtained only the figures for Srathclyde, but perhaps if I obtained those for Angus, the portly frame of the Solicitor-General for Scotland might bounce a little more happily, given the electoral pressure from which he suffers, when the multiplier was lowered and the present scheme extended.

It will be frustrating and irritating for constituents to have to say to their representatives, "Not only are we getting only a marginal benefit from the scheme and being left with substantial rate increases, but we know that another £20 million is available, which will be handed back to the Chancellor and will not benefit Scottish ratepayers. Why can you not take up that extra £20 million by adjusting the scheme?" At that point, the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Eastwood—and other Ministers will be grateful for the fact that this amendment has been accepted, because they will have the machinery to vary the scheme and to use all the available money. They need not go again to the Treasury, because the money is there. It must be good sense to change the scheme so that the Scottish Office can use all the available money.

I hope that that simple, but persuasive and compelling, case will commend itself to Conservative Members. We know from Second Reading that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), the hon. Member for Renfrew West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) and others believe that the £50 million should be spent in the interests of Scottish ratepayers. Unless the Committee accepts the amendment, there will be no machinery to change the scheme, and real difficulties will occur.

I am not talking about natural rebels on the Conservative Benches. The fact that the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross and, I suspect, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) take a strongly independent line about getting the maximum help for the ratepayer from the sum allocated by the Treasury is significant. What is even more significant is that on Second Reading the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden said:

> "I appreciate that eligibility should be set down in the Bill, but is the revaluation of three immutable? Could some other figure, which used up the money, be applied?" — [*Official Report*, 3 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 80.]

He also said that he stood by his threat, if I can call it that, in the *Evening Times* that he will throw all his weight behind effords to ensure that the entire £50 million is applied to rating relief in Scotland.

It is significant when someone such as the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden takes that line, not because I believe greatly in his political weight—I hasten to reassure the Committee on that—but because he is an identikit Tory. He is not one of the world's rebels; he is the loyalest of the loyal. He is the sort of young man that any hon. Member would like to chair his Young

[Mr. Dewar]

Conservatives branch. When the hon. Gentleman comes to the House and says that the £50 million must be used in the way that was trumpeted at the Scottish party conference, and which brought peace to that conference, the Minister should listen to such persuasive arguments. If the hon. Gentleman was here to listen to the arguments —he has not yet appeared for the debate—I like to think that he would vote with us tonight, because it is a sensible amendment that does not commit the Government to a specific figure. It gives them some flexibility instead of leaving them in the lurch, when they would be in the most uncomfortable position of saying: "We have the money, but we shall give it back to the Treasury."

That would be wrong in equity and would be bad for the morale of Scottish ratepayers and for the political system. The Government should keep their clear promise that £50 million will be available. However, there is a grave danger that that promise will be breached unless the Bill contains some flexibility along the lines set out in amendment No. 3.

7.15 pm

Mr. Donald Stewart: In speaking to amendment No. 4, which is in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson), I shall draw attention to a small printing error on the amendment paper. The penultimate line uses the word "multiples" instead of "multipliers". I do not suppose that any of the intelligent members of the Committee were confused by that error, which probably arose from the haste with which the amendment was drafted on Monday night.

I should stress that it has become clear that, if only those whose revalued rateable values are greater than three times their pre-revaluation rateable values will benefit, it has been calculated that considerably less than the £50 million given by the Treasury will be used. The Scottish National party believes that all that money must come to Scotland for the purpose of rates relief. It is little enough compensation as it is, and the Government must not be allowed to get away with skimping on it.

I agree with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) that amendment No. 3 is flexible—indeed, any of the amendments in the group would meet my purpose—but amendment No. 4 states that if the full sum has not been used, the multiplier should be reduced to whatever figure is necessary to ensure the use of the full amount allocated by the Treasury.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the plug will be pulled on this life support next year and that there will be no cash in successive years. It is essential that Scottish ratepayers, domestic and commercial, benefit to the full from the £50 million. Anything less will be regarded as a climbdown and a sell-out of the commitment given to Scottish ratepayers by the Secretary of State at the Perth conference. If he wants to save his political skin and that of other Conservative Members, he would be well advised to accept the amendment. If he does not, he will suffer a renewed backlash in Scotland.

Mr. McQuarrie: The Committee will welcome the presence this evening of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and his contribution to the debate, because he did not bother to appear for the Second Reading of the Bill or to contribute in any way on behalf of the ratepayers to whom he pays lip service when he believes that he can make a political point. He said that no one had done any work to arrive at the factor of 3, but it is worth asking him how he arrived at the figure of 2·5. He said that he had no computer.

The hon. Gentleman tried to hide behind the cloak of the Scottish Federation of Small Businesses and Self Employed when he said that it would have to take its £5 million from the figure of £40 million. Yet he had the audacity to say to the Secretary of State on 14 May that the money was

"a sign of the warped priorities of a Government threatened with extinction in Scotland."—[*Official Report*, 14 May 1985; Vol. 79, c. 178.]

It is strange that he described £40 million of relief as a warped priority when he asked for only £5 million. Would the alliance have allowed less?

Mr. Bruce *rose*——

Mr. McQuarrie: I shall not give way because the hon. Gentleman has had his say. I should like to get rid of amendment No. 2.

The hon. Member for Gordon asked that the load should be spread fairly. I agree with that. In Grampian region, the rateable value before revaluation was £30·72 million for the private domestic ratepayer. After revaluation that figure rose to £86·71 million. The figure was therefore increased 2·82 times, or by 182 per cent. That is well above the 2·5 factor called for by the hon. Member for Gordon. For the local authority domestic ratepayer the figure before revaluation was £13·5 million. After revaluation it became £36·45 million. In that case the figure was increased 2·7 times or by 170 per cent. That is still not down to the factor of 2·5.

The most important element of the £50 million relates to the commercial ratepayer. Before revaluation, the rateable value was £38·51 million and after revaluation it rose to £86·71 million—an increase of 2·82 times or by 182 per cent. We still have not dropped to the denominator of 2·5 which exists in the warped mind of the hon. Member for Gordon. Those are the average figures given by the local authority. There are plainly other increases between 2·7 and 3.

In Grampian region—the hon. Member for Gordon plainly does not know this — it is estimated that approximately 25,000 people and businesses will benefit from the Bill to a total of £2·8 million. Broken down, the figures mean that 21,128 domestic ratepayers and 4,416 commercial ratepayers will benefit.

I support the view that the whole of the £50 million should be used. I prefer amendment No. 4 to amendment No. 3 because I believe that amendment No. 4 covers the point more widely. The two amendments, however, are comparable because they want to achieve the same result —that the £50 million is used.

I hope that when my hon. Friend replies he will give a firm undertaking that the £50 million will be used. We are all aware that the Scottish Office and the local authorities did not know how much would be required to pay on a factor of 3. Computers have to do their work, and they have not yet been able to complete it. We may therefore find that there will be some £20 million in the kitty. I give my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State great credit for having obtained the money from the Treasury. I take no notice of the rubbish about its being to gain an electoral advantage. It was a first-class job done

by an honourable and first-class Secretary of State. *[Interruption.]* There will never be a Liberal Secretary of State, that is for sure.

Will my hon. Friend guarantee that that £50 million will be spent? To take the arbitrary figure that the hon. Member for Gordon and his two colleagues, the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) have suggested is not the best way to achieve that. Neither of those two colleagues of the hon. Member for Gordon are present; nor are any of the other Liberal Members. There is not even a member of the Social Democratic party present.

Mr. Bruce: Where is the Secretary of State?

Mr. McQuarrie: As I said before, he is in Scotland. He has not tabled an amendment. The hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire and for Orkney and Shetland have.

If there is to be £20 million in the kitty, the best thing to do is to reduce the factor from 3 to 2·9. If we still find that the £20 million has not been used, the factor can be reduced to 2·8. That is a fair and reasonable way to work. I am sure that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) will admit that, if we accept the figure of 2·5, there is no guarantee that the total will amount to £50 million. With that factor we might need more than £50 million. We must be grateful for having £50 million of new money, and we must take advantage of it. I hope that my hon. Friend will take note of that, because I do not agree that we should hand the balance of the money back to the Treasury.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman is making a series of reasonable points which he would expect me to support. There is virtue in amendment No. 3, which provides machinery for achieving what we want. Amendment No. 4 merely provides that the Secretary of State would have the power to alter the factor. Amendment No. 3 provides that the figure can be altered by statutory instrument, as is provided in other parts of the Bill. We can then have a debate in the House and watch what is happening. If we do not receive assurances, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join us in the Lobby on that point.

Mr. McQuarrie: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because he has brought the point home to me. I must confess that I had slightly overlooked it. Amendment No. 4 had appeared to me to be more suitable. I accept that amendment No. 3 is probably more in the interests of the Committee, because we do not know the correct factor at the moment.

I regret that I cannot support my hon. Friend if he is not prepared to give an undertaking to the House that the £50 million will be allocated to Scotland in some form or other.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): The logic of the speech of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) is that he should vote for amendment No. 3. An assurance from the Minister will not mean anything unless a facility for doing something about it is written into the Bill. There is no flexibility with the way that the Bill is presently drafted. Amendment No. 3 has the advantage of giving flexibility. The factor could then be adjusted to whatever figure is considered appropriate to produce the sum of £50 million.

With the Bill as presently drafted, the relief granted will not amount to £50 million. We have figures from COSLA. The hon. Gentleman gave us some figures from Grampian region. I have figures for other regions of Scotland. They total slightly less than £30 million. There is a little over £4 million on the domestic side and something over £25 million on the commercial side. We were promised that the domestic relief would amount to £10 million. The available figures show that the relief is less than half for domestic ratepayers. On the commercial side there is a considerable shortfall from the £40 million that we were originally promised. I do not think that there is any dispute about the figures. If there is, no doubt the Under-Secretary will let us know.

7.30 pm

The Government rushed into the legislation without doing any calculations. The announcement was made in the House on 14 May, the consultation meeting with COSLA was not held until 29 May and now that the figures based on the Government's proposals are coming forward, we see that there is a considerable shortfall.

Even now, the Government seem to be making no effort to get additional information. I tabled four questions for answer on Monday, with the idea of getting replies in time for the Second Reading debate on that day, so that hon. Members would have a sensible basis on which to conduct that debate.

I had considerable difficulty getting the answers on Monday at the normal time. I do not want to make too much of it, but the answers arrived considerably later than they should have done on Monday — literally a few minutes before the debate started. The answers were extremely illuminating. One said:

"This information is not available."

It had taken the Government nearly a fortnight to tell me that they could not answer my question. The other answers were equally uninformative.

I asked the Secretary of State

"if he will give the total number of domestic and commercial ratepayers, respectively, for each rating authority in Scotland and for Scotland as a whole and his estimate of the number and percentage . . . who are likely to benefit".

The Secretary of State replied:

"Complete information in the detail requested is not yet available."

I was not even told the number of ratepayers in Scotland. I also asked what the cost would be if the factor were 2·5 or 2·75. I am sure that with a factor of 2·5 the cost would be considerably more than £50 million. The Scottish Office and rating authorities have computers that have been used to make calculations, but the Secretary of State told me:

"I do not have the information on which to base a reliable estimate, and to ask the rating authorities to do the calculations specially does not seem to me a worthwhile use of resources." —[*Official Report*, 3 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. *81-2*.]

The administrative costs of the Bill will be £1 million, but the Government will not even ask local authorities to use their computers to calculate what would happen if different factors were applied. It is a ludicrous position.

The Government do not deserve to get their Bill in the time proposed, because they have not taken the trouble to do essential research to find out what the Bill will cost and what other methods would cost.

Applying a single factor of 3 to every rating authority in Scotland is bound to produce anomalies. Without being specific, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan drew attention to the problem. The impact of the factor of 3 will vary from authority to authority, depending on the

[Mr. Bruce Millan]

revaluation increase for each category of ratepayer. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan said that the percentage increase on the commercial side in Grampian was 182. The increase in Shetland was only 50 per cent., in Orkney it was 70 per cent. and in Lothian and Strathclyde it was 110 per cent. Different increases will lead to different results when the factor of 3 is applied to every local authority.

It would have been possible to have a more sophisticated system providing for different factors and allowing greater equity between ratepayers in various rating authorities. It would take account of the different results of revaluation, not, of course, of the different rate increases that are taking place in 1985-86 anyway. However, the Government rushed in with a crude calculation and did not take the trouble to do other calculations to find out whether a more sophisticated and fairer system could be devised.

Even within regions, there are considerable differences in the minimum rates increases above which ratepayers will qualify for relief. For example, domestic ratepayers in Eastwood will have to pay at least a 43·9 per cent. increase in 1985-86 before getting any relief. Commercial ratepayers in Eastwood will have to pay 62·9 per cent. more before getting relief under the Bill. That is an extraordinarily high threshold and that is only one example.

In Glasgow, relief will be given to domestic ratepayers only after they have paid a 39 per cent. rates increase, and commercial ratepayers will have to pay 52·9 per cent. more before relief is payable. There are a variety of figures in Strathclyde and other regions. I do not have the figures for districts in other regions, but no doubt COSLA and the individual regional authorities will have produced them.

All the information is available, but it has not been given to us. When I ask comparatively simple questions, I am told that the information is not available and that the Government will not even bother to find it. I suppose that they do not want us to know, because such information would enable us to raise intelligent questions in debates such as this.

Unless the Under-Secretary introduces some flexibility into the Bill, there will be a considerable volume of complaints from people who thought that they would get relief, but will have to pay massive rate increases and will get no help. They will also find that other ratepayers paying smaller increases will get help because of the way in which the Bill has been drafted.

There is no reason why, even at this late stage, we should not introduce some flexibility. It is impossible to do that in a thorough and sophisticated way, because none of us has enough information to allow us to draft amendments to change the Bill and be confident that we shall achieve a satisfactory result. However, amendment No. 3 would at least write in the minimum amount of flexibility.

The £50 million was trumpeted as a great victory for the Secretary of State. If the Government were serious about helping ratepayers, we could adjust the factor and ensure that all the £50 million was used. That is all that we are arguing for in the amendments.

I understand why the 2·5 factor has been suggested, but, depending on the revaluation in some areas, that could be extravagantly expensive. However, we are entitled to have answers and it seems that we are not to be given the figures.

Mr. McQuarrie: It is nonsensical.

Mr. Millan: It is never nonsensical to ask for information. Amendments Nos. 3 and 4 are sensible, but I prefer the drafting of No. 3. I hope that the Minister will either accept one of them or give us the necessary assurances. If he does not, I hope that Conservative Members will support us in the Division. Otherwise, there will be a breach of faith over the original announcement, because it is clear that the £50 million will not be reached. In view of all the trouble and argument about revaluation in recent months it would be intolerable if concessions were apparently made and then not used to the full.

Mr. Bill Walker: The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) clearly showed that if one attempts to provide rough justice by using just one figure, there are bound to be areas of injustice.

I believe that I am the first hon. Member to declare a personal interest in the Bill. The cash increase for my domestic dwelling in Blairgowrie is a horrendous 64 per cent., so I shall benefit from the Government's proposals and I welcome that benefit. When I made my plea for action by the Government I proposed that no one should have to pay more than 50 per cent. above the previous year's cash value, and I made that special plea largely for the commercial ratepayers of Angus. With a multiplier of 3, the increase in cash value will be about 52 per cent. for those people, so the Government have come very close to meeting my request in that context and I am grateful for that.

In making that request, I added the qualification that this should apply until those people's appeals had been heard and had been successful, because on the figures given to me by the Government, I judged that many of the shopkeepers and others substantially affected by the revaluation would succeed in their appeals. I based that judgment not just on the previous rateable values but on the rents actually paid by those shopkeepers who paid rent for premises on main streets in Angus. As valuation is supposed to be based on the rent that could be obtained, it seemed clear from those figures that many of the appeals would succeed.

Amendment No. 2 is about as wise and sensible as the nonsensical comments and figures bandied about by alliance Members before the Government's proposals were made, When asked by members of the Press Gallery how much money I believed would be required, I suggested that it would be between £90 million and £120 million if my survey in Angus was representative of the whole of Scotland. I could not say whether it was representative because I could not carry out a survey of the whole of Scotland. In my view, amendment No. 2 is the usual exercise in kite-flying designed to obtain publicity rather than to solve difficult and complex problems.

Ratepayers in Scotland are facing savage increases. We may differ politically about the reasons for those increases, but we must agree that the increases are so savage that they cannot be allowed to remain. The Government have accepted that and have moved very quickly, but I shall be interested to hear their response to amendment No. 3, which seems to provide the kind of flexibility that could not be achieved within the time scale in which the

Government brought their proposals forward. I make no criticism of the remarkable speed with which the Government acted—indeed, I am eternally grateful for it because the situation in Angus was even more appalling than that in Perth and Kinross.

7.45 pm

I appreciate the reasoning behind amendment No. 4 and I do not argue with it because I believe that it is probably right in principle, but the wording is not all that it should be and I believe that amendment No. 3 achieves the same objectives. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will tell us why the Government cannot accept the flexibility proposed in amendment No. 3. Ratepayers in my area would certainly like to believe that the speech made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in Perth means that ratepayers will receive the full value of the £50 million. I am not especially concerned about how that result is achieved but if that sum is available we need to assure ratepayers in Scotland that it will be used in full to mitigate the difficult circumstances in which they find themselves. I believe that many of my constituents will succeed in their appeals against the increases. If that is the case and they do not require the assistance generously proposed by the Government, I shall be delighted.

Mr. Foulkes: I do not know whether the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was present earlier in the debate to hear his hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) laying into the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) with vilification and personal abuse. We in the new, emerging Labour party do not intend to become involved in such dogfights between the old Whig and Tory parties. We intend to concentrate on the merits of the argument and to put a few questions to the Minister.

No explanation has been given publicly or to the House as to how the factor of 3 was arrived at. According to *The Scotsman*, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland said:

"when the scheme was drawn up a decision had been made on the level of revaluation increase that would create an unacceptable burden"

and:

"We decided that level was three times the existing rateable values".

On what basis was that decided? Why should there be such integer worship in this age of computers? If a factor of, say, 2·9 were more appropriate, the calculation could be made just as easily. The Minister has a duty to explain why he decided on a multiplier of 3. *[Interruption.]* I see that the other half of the alliance has arrived, in the shape of the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy)—better late than never, I suppose.

The Prime Minister has promised at least £50 million. What will happen if COSLA is right and only £30 million is spent under the Bill? Will the remainder go back to the Treasury? Will it go into other areas of over-expenditure such as the bottomless pit of fortress Falklands? We need to know. That is why, among many other reasons, I support amendment No. 3 proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), because it provides the flexibility needed to make adjustments in the light of experience when we see the proposals in operation.

The Minister said that the purpose of the exercise was to assist hard-pressed ratepayers, not to undo the changes that had taken place as a result of revaluation. That makes sense. Presumably the purpose of revaluation was to move the burden from certain ratepayers in the commercial sector to others. If so, who in the commercial sector is gaining? The Under-Secretary referred to a hotel in Dumfries and Galloway. Apart from that one example, who are the gainers?

It has been said that a 14 per cent. additional burden is falling on the commercial sector as a whole and that the vast majority of people in that sector are suffering. On the other hand, when we discuss reducing the figure—for example, under the Liberal amendment to 2·5, the Minister says that over half the domestic ratepayers would get relief if there were a 2·5 multiplier. Does that not show that the revaluation has resulted in over half of domestic ratepayers having an increase of more than 2·5 times?

Mr. Ancram: That is what "average" means.

Mr. Foulkes: Of course, but why 2·5? I would not have expected that to be the average. A retired school teacher, now masquerading as an Under-Secretary, may correct me, but may we be told why, at 2·5, half should be above and half below?

Why are there so many regional variations? There seems to be a total difference between Strathclyde on the one hand and, say, Tayside, Lothian and Grampian on the other. There seems to have been no co-ordination or collaboration between the assessors. Nor can I understand how the assessors made their comparisons. I understood that the exercise was supposed to be based on rentals that might be achieved for the premises. One gathers, however, that a whole range of matters come into the calculation, including — dare I mention it? — private houses in Ayr such as the one in which I live, the posh type of house that the Minister described earlier. But there are no houses such as that being rented in the area with which we are concerned. In other words, I do not understand how the bases of comparison were worked out.

It has been said that, because revaluation has taken place north, rather than south, of the border, shops which are branches of United Kingdom multiples can obsorb the increases much better than Scottish-based firms, so that the former can rejoice in the fact that in most of their shops south of the border they do not have the same burden. That is not the case for the Co-ops in Scotland or for all other Scottish-based companies.

I hope that the Minister will take the Labour amendment seriously. Power would remain in the hands of the Minister and at the end of the day, in the light of experience, the Secretary of State would be free to decide what, if any, action to take. If, as COSLA has predicted, £20 million will not be taken up, the amendment will be necessary, and the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), if no one else, should support it.

Mr. Ancram: We have had another interesting debate on this important topic. The remarks of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) underlined some of the confusions that have arisen in the public mind as a result of the revaluation. Indeed, they underlined also the reason why we are keen to look again at the system of financing local government so as to find a better way of doing that. We are delighted to note that at least he among Opposition Members is with us on that, and we look forward to hearing further from the occupants of the Opposition Front Bench about their views on the subject.

[Mr. Ancram]

There has been some misunderstanding over this issue recently as was clear from the Second Reading debate on Monday. The scheme arose initially from an appreciation by the Government — and by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), as he made clear at Scottish Question Time recently — that ratepayers had been hard hit by revaluation.

I do not want to rub it in, but the hon. Member for Garscadden has in the past welcomed revaluation. He appreciates, however, that a number of ratepayers have been severely affected at the margins of revaluation. He offered the Government co-operation in introducing a mechanism to help the hardest hit. If he did not use those exact words, he used words to that effect. The scheme sets out to do that. It aims—this is what the Bill puts into practice—to remove the worst cases due to the sudden revaluation changes that have occurred.

The threshold multiplier of 3, which the Government have selected, is not designed—and it would have been wrong had it been designed—to nullify or neutralise the effects of revaluation. It is designed to deal with the harsh and difficult cases on the margins but not, as it were, to re-write the revaluation. Indeed, we should not do that, because if we were merely to re-write it in favour of those who were losers as a result of revaluation, without doing anything for the gainers, we should create a very strange and distorted pattern indeed. We all accept that there are good reasons for changes in valuations, and if those reasons do not apply in the cases of any valuations, the assessors must defend those valuations in the court.

Thus, we looked at the range between 2·33, which is the average revaluation multiplier for all property in Scotland—that is the level in general or average terms, so that if one is below that level one gains from revaluation and if one is above it, one loses—and ranges beyond that, through 3 to 4, as suggested by the Federation of Small Businesses and the Self-Employed, and at some of the other ranges of revaluation affecting properties in Scotland.

The difference between 2·33 and the 3 times multiplier leaves a range which allows revaluation still to be effective in the terms that it is supposed to be effective, yet at the same time allows us to protect the hardest hit. Above a multiplier of 3—given that there are variations; the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) was right to point to regional variations — the results of the revaluation in terms of the rate effect would have been unacceptable.

For that reason, we chose a multiplier of 3, and on to that we have built a scheme which is simple and straightforward and, most important, which enables people to understand whether they do or do not qualify. We hope that, as a result, we are meeting the target that we sought to cover in the first place.

Mr. Dewar: I wish to be clear about the implications of the Minister's remarks. Is he saying that the Government are satisfied that in working the scheme based on a uniform multiplier of 3, they have done enough? Should the scheme cost only £25 million, leaving the other £25 million unallocated, would the Government then not want to use that other £25 million? In other words, is not the impression that £50 million was being found to help Scottish ratepayers a mistaken impression? Are the Government saying that the scheme is complete and that, no matter how big the shortfall, they will not make it up?

Mr. Ancram: I shall be dealing with that. If we reduced the multiplier trigger in the scheme down towards the average multiplier, we should in effect be removing the effects of revaluation. If the hon. Gentleman believes that revaluations should take place—he pressed us to carry out this revaluation—he will accept that we must set a trigger point which will leave an effective revaluation while at the same time protecting the hardest hit. The scheme is demand led. Once the eligible category has been defined, the amount that the scheme will cost will depend upon how many people fit into that category. There will not be an allocation of fixed money.

8 pm

On a decision to focus on a level of valuation above which rebate is to be given reflects the judgment that approximately three times this year's revaluation is about the right level at which to intervene and reduce the effects of revaluation. The amount of money that it will cost has been the subject of a number of conjectures, both high and low, during the last two months. As I said during the Second Reading debate on Monday, I do not believe that we shall know the total amount of money that will be expended on the scheme until the last eligible ratepayer has been paid.

Mr. Millan: Will the Under-Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Ancram: I shall give way to the right hon. Gentleman in a minute.

At that time we shall know precisely what the outturn figure is. As the analyses of the revaluation take place those figures will become more accurate, but I do not believe that we shall know the exact figures until the last ratepayer has been paid.

Mr. Millan: I do not suppose that we shall know the exact figure down to the nearest pound, but we know that it will not be £50 million. It will be nearer £30 million, and perhaps even less than that.

Mr. Ancram: The right hon. Gentleman presided over the last revaluation and we saw its effect upon commercial ratepayers. At that stage the right hon. Gentleman never suggested that any scheme of relief should be provided. He is now complaining about what, on any view, is a very generous scheme in terms of both money and eligibility. The people of Scotland have looked carefully at the Government's proposals. They accept that both the financial commitment and the scheme underline the concern felt by the Government for those who have been hardest hit by revaluation.

Mr. Millan: The Under-Secretary of State is surely not disputing the COSLA figures, which amount to less than £30 million. We know that there will be a shortfall of £20 million.

Mr. Ancram: As I said on Monday, my understanding is that those figures are not yet complete. We cannot begin to give figures until we know which ratepayers are eligible under the scheme.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Can the Under-Secretary of State explain why he chose the figure of 3 instead of 2·9 or 2·8? Can he also explain why the

figure of £50 million was announced? Were the Scottish Office figures based only upon a random look at the Strathclyde valuation roll? Was there no consideration of the situation facing Fife, Central, Lothian, the Highlands, the Grampians and the Borders?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman has not attended the greater part of our debate today. His question has already been answered. I have already made it clear that, if one reduces too far towards the average multiplier, one effectively writes off revaluation. An element of judgment is involved. The difference is between an average multiplier of 2·3 and a multiplier of 3. Within that area we believe that revaluation will have its full effect. The increase that will be paid by those who are above the multiplying factor of 3 will be rebated to them under the scheme. The people of Scotland appreciate, by and large, that it is those who are over the multiplier of 3 who are the hardest hit. Multipliers of 4, 5 and even 6 have been given to me. Those people are very hard hit and they appreciate what the Government are doing for them. The Opposition are doing themselves no good by cavilling over figures when we are talking about sums of money which are so much bigger than anything that they suggested when they said that there ought to be a scheme of this kind.

Mr. Maxton: Will the Under-Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Ancram: No, I have already given way to many hon. Members during both this debate and the last debate.

The Government's proposals are reasonable and simple. That is important if the scheme is to operate effectively and quickly. The amendments would take rebates beyond the level that we think is reasonable and would complicate the operation of the scheme. The amendment moved by the hon. Member for Garscadden would create vast areas of uncertainty. One of the benefits of the Bill is that those who are eligible will know that they are eligible. That eligibility will continue. According to the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Garscadden, the multiplier could, on occasion, be increased as well as reduced from year to year. Those who are eligible would not know whether they would continue to be eligible under any future scheme. That is not the right way to proceed.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister has said something which I believe is quite important. Is he saying that, as it is drawn, the scheme can be continued if he exercises his discretion next October and that it would have to be continued in the same way and at exactly the same level?

Mr. Ancram: It would not necessarily be continued in the same way, because the manner of the scheme is contained within the order. Those who are eligible are defined in the Bill in terms of both their category and of the multiplier that is required to trigger their eligibility. The simplicity of the Bill, which is important to its implementation, is helped by dealing with it in this way. Therefore, I ask the Committee to reject the amendments and to support the Government.

Mr. Craigen: Having heard what the Under-Secretary of State has had to say, I am now more than ever convinced of the virtue of amendment No. 3. Irrespective of whether it is the Liberal party's 2·5, or the Scottish National party's £50 million, or our amendment No. 3, which proposes a variable but with a full take-up of the £50 million, we want the package that was announced in Perth to be spent for the benefit of Scottish ratepayers. It is clear that the revaluation relief package that was announced was both a platform confidence trick by the Secretary of State for Scotland and an exercise in back-stage bungling. The more time that has elapsed the more evident it has become that the Scottish Office computer is not working. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) pointed out, all the rating authority computers are busily churning out the kind of information that was quoted earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

I hope that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) will withdraw his amendment. It was not scientificallycalculated. He admitted as much earlier. I do not blame him for that. The Government are even more guilty. They have been unable to provide precise figures. I hope that the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) will also withdraw his amendment, because we are at one with him. We want the £50 million to be spent in Scotland. Amendment No. 3 provides the mechanism which would make it possible to achieve the lower factor.

Several hon. Members have asked the Under-Secretary of State how the magic figure of 3 emerged. I know that the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) thinks in threes. Several hon. Members served on a Standing Committee in which he always spoke of three, or 30 or 300. I wonder, therefore, whether the Stirling factor had something to do with this. When the Secretary of State made his statement to the House on 14 May I asked him how many people would come within the 2·7 and the 3 factor on the domestic side and the 2·2 and the 3 factor on the commercial side. He did not tell. It is now quite obvious that he did not know. Furthermore, he could not even give the number of people on the commercial and domestic side who would benefit from the factor of 3.

On 16 May I wrote to the Secretary of State about the Government's revaluation relief scheme. I was trying to be as practical and constructive as possible, and I wrote:

"If, by the end of June, the take-up by domestic and commercial ratepayers is nowhere near the £50 million allocated, will you consider reducing the threshold from three times the rateable value to 2·7 times in respect of domestic ratepayers and 2·2 times in respect of the commercial sector? As I understand your aim, it is to neutralise the effect of the 1985 revaluation increases and you did indicate that 2·7 and 2·2 respectively represented neutral average increases arising from the revaluation."

On 23 May, the Minister replied, and in his long letter, which did not tell me much, he said:

"we now think there might be up to a quarter of a million properties which could stand to benefit, including both domestic and non-domestic."

When the Secretary of State for Scotland announced this scheme in all the paraphernalia after the Perth conference on 14 May, we were led to believe that about 300,000 would benefit from the scheme: 250,000 domestic ratepayers and 50,000 businesses. But the more time goes by, the more the beneficiaries seem to disappear. The Minister still cannot tell us how many beneficiaries there are under the scheme. Indeed, it is quite evident that when the statement was broadcast at Perth, the Secretary of State just did not know. It was all political camouflage.

The delegates at Perth had to be told something. The Secretary of State had to assure them that the Scottish Tory Members at Westminster were not an extinct breed. Consequently, he came up with the £50 million figure. To

[Mr. Craigen]

compound everything, the Chancellor of the Exchequer was then telling the Scottish press that the Secretary of State would not get his £50 million next year. *[Interruption.]* As has been pointed out, we shall not even get the money this year. Indeed, the figures from the local authorities and the business sector show that the figure is more likely to be about £30 million.

The Government have put a lot of effort into their revaluation rebate scheme, but it must be seen against the background of Monday's social security review. The same Government who have kidded all their Back Benchers about there being a reform of the rating process propose to get 750,000 Scots on housing benefit to pay rates. The Government say that in order to ensure that those people know what rating is all about, they will have to pay at least 20 per cent. of their rates. On the one hand the Treasury says that it will give £50 million this year to help over the revaluation, but on the other hand the DHSS says that it will begin to bring 750,000 people into the rating network. In the euphemistic terms of the Civil Service, I believe that that is called departmental log-rolling. I refer to the idea that if one Department gives, another has to take away. At the end of the day there are sufferers from all those administrative changes.

I hope that the hon. Member for Gordon and the right hon. Member for Western Isles will ultimately agree to support amendment No. 3. More importantly, I hope that all those Tory Back Benchers who make speeches to ratepayers want to see that £50 million spent, and will be in the Lobby with us. I hope that they will not sit on the fence and abstain, but will support amendment No. 3.

8.15 pm

Mr. Bruce: Having been at the receiving end of an unprovoked and unexpected attack from my neighbour, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), I was interested to note that the Minister did not say why 2·5 was unacceptable, or what it would cost. Presumably, he was unable to do so. I accept that it would bring many more people into benefit, which was the point of lowering the threshold. Indeed, that was the point of the amendment. If the Minister was anxious to suggest that the figure is unacceptable, I should have thought that he would have some arguments to support him. However, he was unable to produce them. He could not say whether the £50 million would be underspent and if so, by how much, and by how much my proposal would put the figure over £50 million.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan seems to think that the Government's proposals will be greeted with rapture by ratepayers. If he goes to areas in my constituency, including parts that he used to represent, he will find the reception less than enthusiastic. If Banff and Buchan is compared with Gordon, hon. Members may understand why the hon. Gentleman can afford to be slightly more complacent. The average increase in domestic valuations in Banff and Buchan is 260 per cent. compared with 280 per cent. in Gordon and 290 per cent. in the city of Aberdeen. In cash terms, the average increase in the domestic rate element for Banff and Buchan is 6·7 per cent., but in Gordon it is 15 per cent. and in Aberdeen 14·1 per cent. When the commercial factor is considered, the figures are even more interesting. The increase is 230 per cent. in Banff and Buchan, 260 per cent. in Gordon and 280 per cent. in Aberdeen. In cash terms, that is 9·1 per cent. in Banff and Buchan, 27·5 per cent. in Gordon and 27·1 per cent. in Aberdeen. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman must recognise that people facing such rate increases are looking for much more relief than the Government are offering.

It is a cause for concern that the Government have now implied that if the Bill is enacted unamended there will be no opportunity to adjust, in the way that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan implied would be acceptable, if the full allocation is not taken up. Clearly, the best way of allocating any extra cash is to lower the threshold to ensure that more people benefit. But that possibility will not be open to the Government if they do not accept any of the amendments.

In the interest of ensuring that we unite behind one amendment that gives the flexibility that the Bill needs, and that the Government will need, I am willing to withdraw my amendment and to urge my colleagues to vote for amendment No. 3. However, if the Government resist it, they will find that the outrage of this year will be as nothing compared with next year, because the people will realise that they have been conned and bought off for a year. Those Conservative Members who have said that they are keen to ensure that there is a full take-up should vote with us and demonstrate that they are not prepared just to use weasel words for the benefit of their constituents but are also prepared to stand up and fight. Accordingly, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment proposed: No. 3 in page 1, line 13, after 'value', insert

'or such other figure as shall be set by statutory instrument which shall not have effect until approved by resolution of the Commons House of Parliament'.—*[Mr. Dewar.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 108, Noes 181.

Division No. 228] **[8.19 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Foulkes, George
Freud, Clement
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*

McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Robertson, George
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. James Hamilton.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Cranborne, Viscount
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hayes, J.
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Irving, Charles
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

8.30 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): On a point of order, Mr. Walker. I apologise for interrupting the flow of this important debate, but I have a matter that needs to be drawn to the attention of the House and which touches on the safety of those who work in the House and of those who visit us. The facts are as follows. Midway through yesterday afternoon, the secretary of a colleague of mine was taken seriously ill in Norman Shaw South and immediately moved to Westminster hospital where she was put into the intensive care unit. I understand that word filtered back that part of the reason for her condition was, to use the word received, the "poisoning" of the water supply system at Norman Shaw South. Early this morning, before staff had arrived, an announcement was made on the public Tannoy system in Norman Shaw South saying that the water supply should not be used for drinking, but no further steps were taken and none of the staff who arrived later than 9 o'clock was so informed, although in due course notices were put on the taps.

About midday, my secretary, who was involved in the incident yesterday, informed me that there was considerable concern among hon. Members' secretaries in Norman Shaw South; they were unclear about what had happened and of the danger in which they stood. I asked the Serjeant at Arms to provide information as to what had happened and to assure me that appropiate steps had been taken to ensure that our staff were being adequately informed so that they could protect their health.

I was informed that investigations into the water supply were going on, but that they would not achieve any results

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

until later. Meanwhile, I received assurances that staff would be informed. The Chief Whip of my party, my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), received similar assurances that it was not known what had gone wrong with the water supply but that investigations were underway.

It has now come to my notice that the press has been told that what happened was that at 11.30 yesterday morning, some 22 gallons of anti-corrosion liquid intended for the central heating system in Norman Shaw South, were poured into the water supply system by accident, and that that liquid contained certain unpleasant chemicals. I am also told that the press was informed, although hon. Members—in particular my hon. Friend for Berwick-upon-Tweed and I—were not, that these facts were known at 8.50 last night. The facts will be published tomorrow morning.

It is important that we should know why this has happened, why such hopelessly inadequate steps were taken to inform our staff this morning, why the situation was not explained to us, and why were we not told the facts. Further than that, why were we positively misled? Some of our staff and some who visit the House may have been endangered by the appalling accident that occurred yesterday, but some of them may also have been endangered by the fact that such inadequate steps have been taken. I have no doubt that if the facts that I now have are true and if we were formal employers, we would be liable to action under the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act.

We must now have a clear statement on the current position and clear instructions that will provide for the safety of our staff and others who visit the House. We need assurances that there will be a full investigation of the matter. I hope that you, Mr. Walker, agree that it will be appropriate for the responsible Minister to come to the House to give some assurances.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): There is one difficulty—we are in Committee at the moment and, strictly speaking, we should not be discussing such a matter. However, in view of the seriousness of what the hon. Gentleman has told the Committee, I felt that it was proper to allow the hon. Gentleman to go on. I see that the Leader of the House is present and wishes to speak.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I should like to respond to the points that have been raised, which I realise have caused great anxiety. I am sure that hon. Members in all parties will be anxious for Mrs. Jacqueline Winter, hope that she will make a speedy recovery, and feel concern about the incident. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) has made a number of accusations and raised a number of points that are clearly of substance. I shall arrange for a statement to be made at the earliest possible moment.

The Chairman: I think that it will be sensible for us to leave the matter at that now and return to the debate.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2

FINANCE

Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Craigen: I should like the Minister to tell us something about the working of the clause. It relates to the reimbursement to rating authorities of the payments that they make under the scheme. We tabled an amendment about administrative costs, but it has not been selected. However, perhaps the Minister will reply to some of the points that I and other hon. Members made on Second Reading, but to which he did not have the time or opportunity to reply in detail.

For example, I note that the Secretary of State will be determining the conditions as to records, certificates, audits and other things over which the payments will be made. Will the audit be at the end of the financial year? Will local authorities be involved in outlays earlier in the current financial year, for which they will not be reimbursed until the end of the financial year?

On Second Reading, we raised a number of points about interest charges to local authorities. Clearly, although the Government are proposing to reimburse local authorities for the payments that they make under the scheme, the payments themselves may involve local authorities in extra costs. I think that the Secretary of State referred to the payments not involving local authorities in any breach of guidelines. However, in his winding-up speech on Second Reading, the Minister did not answer my question as to whether the costs that rating authorities would incur in administering this scheme would bring them into difficulty in complying with the Government's guidelines over rate support grant and expenditure.

Will the Minister take the opportunity today to answer a point that has been left in the air? Nobody knows precisely what the position will be. Therefore, I should be grateful if the Minister will dispel some of the lingering doubts and anxieties.

Mr. Ancram: I am always keen to dispel the doubts, lingering or otherwise, of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen). The hon. Gentleman will find that on Monday I answered one of his specific questions about the difficulties that might be faced by local authorities which might have to wait for reimbursement. I said that we would consider whether there was some way in which we might help them by making advance reimbursement before final certification was completed.

In regard to administrative costs, I listened carefully on Monday to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and to other hon. Members. Having given the matter consideration, my right hon. Friend proposes, in exercising powers already available to him, to disregard for guideline purposes certain local authority expenditure on the administration of the rebate scheme in 1985-86. My Department will be discussing with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities the exact terms of the disregard.

The hon. Member for Maryhill was rightly concerned that in some circumstances authorities might find themselves penalised for the cost of the administration of the scheme. I hope that I have clarified that point to the satisfaction of the hon. Gentleman. In view of what my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling said on Monday, I hope that he will feel that we have responded to the valid points that were made.

Mr. Craigen: I am grateful to the Minister for reassuring me about the disregard in respect of payments incurred. This is not really the time to raise the matter, but I still think the Government are being unfair in burdening rating authorities with the cost of administering the scheme. Although the Bill refers to £1 million, that is only an estimate. In view of the earlier discussion about the take-up of £20 million, I wonder whether the calculation will be a little more realistic.

Mr. Ancram: If the hon. Member is right in his first estimate, compared to the estimate that we made, he will find that the cost of administration will go down commensurately.

Mr. Craigen: I wonder. I was about to say to the Minister that in view of the fact that there will be reclaims of rebates already made, where a person has succeeded in his valuation appeal it seems that the rating authority will be involved in a second set of expenditure. The Government have rightly left it to the rating authorities to identify those ratepayers who will be eligible under the scheme. As rating authorities are being given this direct responsibility, it would make more sense for the Government to acknowledge that they should have direct responsibility for the administration of the scheme.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3

CITATION, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Mr. Dewar: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 2, line 38, leave out 'which'.

The Chairman: With this amendment it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 9, in page 2, line 39, leave out from '1985' to the end of line 40.

Mr. Dewar: We are now galloping towards the close. There has been a slightly ungracious welcome for the amount of co-operation that we have given to the Bill. We are allowing it through in a remarkably expeditious fashion. As an instance of that, in the normal Committee stage I could have been happily entertained for many hours discussing the amendments now under consideration. I say that unashamedly. I shall now dispose of them in about 90 seconds, to my considerable regret. It is an exercise in self-discipline that surprises me.

This matter arose on Second Reading. The Committee will remember that clause 3 says:

"This Act . . . shall come into force on the expiry of 2 months beginning with the day on which it is passed."

I want an assurance about whether that means that the Bill does not come into force until two months after it has completed its passage through the House of Lords. While I accept that their Lordships will not delay the Bill, that means that the two months will start in some weeks' time.

8.45 pm

The order is an essential part of the apparatus without which we cannot have positive action to disburse money. If it cannot be laid until the Act is in force, I suspect that, because of the parliamentary timetable, we could not have it until the autumn. That will delay the whole business of calculation and disbursement so far into the financial year as to raise substantial difficulties for local authorities and for the Scottish Office.

Can we have an assurance from the Minister that if he insists on keeping the time lag of two months in the Bill it will be possible to lay and debate the statutory instrument within that two-month period without having to wait until the Bill comes into force? If the answer is yes, it will remove my fear to some extent.

The Minister might take a minute to explain the matter. I am not sure why we need the provision that the Bill shall not come into force until two months after it completes its passage through Parliament. There does not seem to be any rationale in that. Obviously there must be, and perhaps the Minister will explain it.

The real problem is that it seems illogical if the statutory instrument depends upon the Bill. If the Bill does not come into force for two months, can we start the statutory instrument on its way before the expiry of that two months? If we cannot, there will be considerable problems. I am sure the Minister has followed the point and I shall be grateful for his answer.

Mr. Ancram: As I said in reply to the Second Reading debate, the Bill is in accordance with normal practice in coming into force after two months. Much requires to be done before effect can be given to the Bill. We have to give local authorities and ratepayers a period of two months to make the necessary arrangements. The order setting out the details of the scheme must be brought before the House after the Bill has been enacted. To answer the point the hon. Member was making, this can be done after Royal Assent has been given to the Bill and does not have to wait until the Bill comes into operation in two months' time.

We are working towards a period of two months during which certain administrative arrangements will have to be made. The order will have to be laid and approved by both Houses of Parliament. Thereafter, at the end of two months the scheme will be capable of being operated. We wish to see the scheme in operation if possible before we get to the stage when rate bills have to be paid in September. The timetable in the Bill will allow that to happen.

If the amendments were to be accepted they would not in practice make any difference to the timetable because the work will have to be done in any event. The timetable does not delay the operation of the Bill in the sense of making sure that it achieves what it set out to achieve within the time scale that both the hon. Gentleman and I want. On that basis, I hope the hon. Gentleman will be prepared to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Dewar: I will be prepared to withdraw the amendment on that assurance. Like the Minister, I am anxious to see the machinery in operation as quickly as possible. Many people will already be paying their rates on the 10-month instalment basis. The first instalment will have been paid in May so adjustments will have to be made, presumably in the subsequent instalments towards the end of the financial year. A new book will be issued showing a lower rate of contribution for those who are getting something out of the rebate scheme.

If the Minister is satisfied that he does not need to delay the statutory instrument and that the period of two months is really of no importance, I am prepared to take that assurance. Therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 2

LIMITATION OF RELIEF

'The total rebate payable will be restricted to a maximum of 10 premises and a total maximum of £50,000 for any one corporate body.'—*[Mr. Bruce.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Bruce: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause is an attempt to provide a further targeting element in the Bill. I was taken aback by a phone call two or three weeks ago from a shopkeeper who thinks that the Bill does not prevent large companies with chain stores from receiving substantial benefit. I believe that the measure should concentrate on small businesses and small shop units. I do not want to repeat my argument about the threshold being too low, but the Bill should not enable large amounts to be refunded to relatively large companies.

It is difficult to be specific, but some companies have many branches consisting of small shops such as newsagents and supermarkets which might be able to claim rebate on each of their premises. That could mean that tens of thousands of pounds could go to one enterprise. That would be regrettable if the money was then not available to assist small businesses with only one or two outlets. The measure is designed to try to save businesses which might cease to trade as a direct result of rate increases.

The shopkeeper told me that she operated two shops —one in Aberdeen and the other in York. The shop in York, which is six times larger than the shop in Aberdeen, pays rates of £850 and the much smaller Aberdeen shop, under the new revaluation, will pay rates totalling £1,400. The Bill will give that shopkeeper rate relief, but she will still have to pay substantially more for her shop in Aberdeen than for her larger shop in York.

I appreciate that the Bill is confined to Scotland and that therefore the comparison is not valid, but the point will not be lost on the Minister. Many of the larger groups which trade throughout the United Kingdom might be able to claim substantial rebates.

As the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) said, a major store moving into a town centre is an asset and we must consider that. However, that is a wider problem and might be resolved by the abolition of the rating system. Businesses should not have to pay more rates in Scotland than they pay in England and Wales. That possibility is causing concern and might affect future investment and development in Scotland.

The new clause ensures that no chain store operator receives a substantial rebate. The money saved could be redirected to ensure that the benefit goes to those who need it most. If nothing else, it could be used by the Government to assist small businesses in other ways by reducing the costs of their overheads.

Most hon. Members will have received representations from the National Federation of Small Businesses and Self-Employed which is looking for a £10,000 limit. That is probably too narrow a boundary. It restricts assistance to a maximum of 10 premises and a maximum figure of £50,000. That would ensure that all medium-sized businesses would receive full benefit but that the large businesses which are best able to carry the burden would be restricted to a £50,000 rebate. The Minister says that he does not want to neutralise the effect of revaluation, but that is a different argument.

Mr. McQuarrie: I oppose the new clause because the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) is wrong again. He spoke about chains, but he has forgotten that the chains operate individual shops in different towns. An example is C and J Clark, the retail shoe operator, which has over 100 retail shoe outlets throughout Scotland in the names of Peter Lord, Ravel and K shoes. They are individual businesses employing managers and staff. If they cannot enjoy the benefits that can arise from revaluation they will be penalised. The firm estimates that the increased rate burden for all its Scottish shops will amount to an additional £300,000 this year. It estimates that £75,000 will be returned as a result of my right hon. Friend's scheme announced on 14 May. Without that the firm will have to pay an additional rate poundage throughout Scotland of £225,000 this year. That would be unfair because we are talking about small businesses.

I totally support small businesses. There are two such shoe shops in Aberdeen and three in my consituency and I am sure that there are more in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. If they are forced out of business it will be because they have not enjoyed the advantages of the Government's scheme. I urge hon. Members to reject the new clause. We are talking about small businesses in 100 places in Scotland.

Mr. Foulkes: I shall be brief because for once I agree with the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie). I doubt whether the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) has thought about co-operative societies. I am sure that if the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) were here he would not support his hon. Friend because he is a good and active co-operative supporter, and always has been. The new clause could be devastating for some co-operative societies. It is certainly not welcomed by the co-operative movement. The hon. Gentleman should withdraw the motion.

Mr. Dewar: I shall be brief because I recognise that other issues are battering at the door. I have sympathy with the motives behind the new clause. We want help to go to the right people in the right degree, but the hon. Gentleman's case in based upon a fallacy. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) argued that, if money were saved, it could be given to others.

The Minister has made it painfully clear that that is not an option open to us and that there will be a substantial underspend, and I think that we can now be confident on the scheme.

Considering the real situation in Scotland and some of the figures with which the Retail Consortium has been supplying us, the case is perhaps not as clear-cut as the hon. Member for Gordon may have thought when tabling the amendment. I could think of a large number of complications about firms which have premises in different regions and different districts and the problems that would arise therefrom.

Therefore, although I have sympathy with this, my advice to my hon. Friends is not to support the amendment.

9 pm

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has made one of the basic points

which I intended to make about the amendment—that it would clearly severely complicate the Bill as well as be unfair. In particular, where there are, for instance, different stores belonging to the same company or chain but within different valuation areas, it would create difficulties to ascertain where they were and what their relationship was. I am sure that the hon. Member for Gordon would not wish unnecessarily to complicate the scheme.

The spirit of the amendment has been met, in that we have already announced that we are putting a £10,000 limit on the amount of rebate that can be obtained by any one rateable subject. I believe that that is a necessary safeguard. It was in response to a number of representations that one would find certain subjects qualifying for a lot more than that. We believed that it was necessary to put a safeguard on this. That will be included in the order. On that basis, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Bruce: I have listened with interest to the points made. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) highlighted my concern—that, given our present lack of information, some chain store operators could still take up a substantial amount of the money available. If that were the case and there were an overspend, I think that most hon. Members would appreciate the need to provide some limit.

As to the co-operatives, I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), although I could also argue that many of the co-operatives are organised in groups which would probably leave them outside the limit.

Allowing for that point and reaffirming my concern that £10,000 per premises could add up to a substantial amount for any one company, but because there is a desire to terminate the Committee and because the point has been made and registered, I can only hope that I am not proved wrong and that there are no circumstances in which it will be found that a substantial amount of money has been taken up by rebates to individual companies. Given all our assumptions on the basis of our lack of information that we are discussing amounts of £30 million or £40 million but under £50 million, and in view of the comments that have been made. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Bill reported, without amendment; considered.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Appropriation (Northern Ireland)

9.2 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): I beg to move,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 8th May, be approved.

The order is being made under paragraph 1 of schedule 1 to the Northern Ireland Act 1974. The order provides the balance of the money necessary in 1985-86 for the services provided by Northern Ireland Departments and certain other public bodies. On 7 March the House approved a total of £1,323 million as "a sum on account". Today I seek the balance of £1,733 million, making up a total estimate for 1985-86 of £3,056 million. This is the figure which appears on the front of the Estimates volume which is available from the Vote Office. It is this Estimates volume which gives full details of projected expenditure.

The draft order also appropriates an additional £4 million to cover excess expenditure in the 1983-84 financial year in class VII, vote 1, which covers protective services such as the fire service, and class X, vote 2, which covers non-contributory social security benefits. These two "excess votes", as they are termed, have been examined by the Select Committee on Public Accounts which has raised no objection to them being voted. Details of the excess expenditure are set out in the "Statement of Excesses" pamphlet which has also been placed in the Vote Office.

Before dealing with the detail of the Estimates, I think it is appropriate to reflect upon the broad economic prospects. The United Kingdom as a whole is about to enter the fifth year of continuous economic growth. Recent economic indicators show that Northern Ireland continues to share in this revival. The trend for total industrial production has been upward since mid-1983 with output in 1984 3 per cent. above the level for 1983. Manufacturing production also rose by 3 per cent. in 1984 following a similar rise in 1983. As I have said before, the recovery in manufacturing has been fairly broadly based with most sectors showing some improvement. The most recent employment figures for the Province are also encouraging. Although the trend is still downwards, the rate of decline has fallen significantly. In the second half of 1984, total employment actually rose by over 4,000. However, last year as a whole there was a net decline of 660. This compares with declines of around 3,100 in the year ended December 1983 and 14,500 in the previous year.

Unemployment at around 21 per cent. remains the major economic problem in the Province. As the population of working age continues to rise, the trend in unemployment remains upward. Nevertheless, there was an overall decrease of 1,370 in the unemployment figures published on 31 May compared with the previous month, plus a decrease of 500 in the seasonally adjusted unemployed.

Recent surveys of the Province are in general agreement that investment and future employment prospects present a more cheerful picture than we have seen for many years.

Turning now to the Estimates, class I covers agriculture, fisheries and forestry and provides for expenditure of £73 million in the current financial year.

[Dr. Rhodes Boyson]

The basic aims of this expenditure are, within overall United Kingdom priorities, to help create in Northern Ireland the conditions for efficient production, processing and marketing of the products of this very important industry and to maximise the sector's contributions to the development of the regional economy. The major constituents of the ongoing agriculture programme are £15 million for education, research and development. Some £12 million is for direct agricultural support; £27 million for administration and miscellaneous services, including support to the industry by way of advisory and veterinary services; £18 million for drainage and forestry; and £5·5 million for continuation of the milk consumer subsidy which enables a higher wholesale price to be charged by the Milk Marketing Board for milk for the liquid market while ensuring that Northern Ireland consumers pay about the same retail price for milk as their Great Britain counterparts.

While on the subject of milk, I again emphasise that I recognise the serious concern in the farming industry in the Province. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and other right hon. and hon. Members have been pressing the case of the particular difficulties facing certain categories of Northern Ireland producers. I want to assure the House that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are still in consultation on this question. I can say no more at the moment.

I should perhaps add, for the information of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), that it is from vote 3 of this class that we will provide a grant for the new dredger for Kilkeel harbour. I know that our decision to approve this project was welcomed by the fishing industry, and hon. Members will be interested to know that the contract has now been let at a figure of almost £400,000 over the next two years.

While on the subject of fisheries, the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) has drawn my attention to the concern being expressed by Mourne fishermen about the scallop beds close to the Northern Ireland coast which they fear may be overfished when the beds elsewhere in the North Irish sea are closed. We are fully aware of this concern and, as promised to those who made representations last year, the scallop fishery is being closely monitored with a view to having scallop beds closed if stocks are endangered. I recognise that the right hon. Member may have other points to raise on this subject, and I will listen with interest to his remarks.

Class II, votes 1 and 2, provide for the activities of the Industrial Development Board. More than half of the £22·7 million sought in vote 1 will be directed at infrastructural developments such as factory building, site and estate developments, and £3·6 million has also been earmarked to underpin the IDB's efforts in promoting Northern Ireland as a location for inward investment. In vote 2, some £62 million is being sought for selective assistance to industry. Hon. Members will be aware that the creation and support of viable employment in Northern Ireland is a major element in the Government's economic strategy for the Province, and that we are committed to the provision of adequate resources to maintain securely based industrial projects in Northern Ireland.

Under class II, vote 3, some £93 million is being sought to provide support mainly for the Local Enterprise Development Unit, the small firms agency, the aircraft and shipbuilding industries of Shorts and of Harland and Wolff, and for assistance under the standard capital grants scheme. Of that amount, £16·7 million has been provided for LEDU, £32·6 million for Harland and Wolff, and £6·6 million has been allocated to Shorts. Right hon. and hon. Members will be aware that Shorts has been successful in winning three highly competitive contracts since the beginning of the year. They will keep Shorts in the forefront of the aerospace industry and increase its share of defence work on the aircraft aerostructures side of its business. All those contracts should provide a secure base for employment at Shorts.

We have had the disappointing news about Lear Fan. The decision by the company to cease trading was taken in the light of further setbacks to the aircraft's certification programme and the recent steep decline in the market for executive turbo-prop aircraft. When the company ceased trading the Government's remaining commitment was $4·79 million and, obviously, that amount will not now be paid. Both the Government and the major private sector consortium involved in the project were released from their remaining funding commitments. The Department of Economic Development appointed a receiver on 28 May 1985 to secure the company's assets in Northern Ireland, and to represent the Government's interest in the assets and technology in the United States of America.

The total amount invested by the Government in the project has been some £56 million over five years. Private sector investment has been almost $100 million. I must emphasise that the failure of the project cannot in any way be blamed on the Northern Ireland work force and, indeed, their loyalty and contribution to the project is to be praised. If the project had succeeded, it would have brought very welcome high technology and employment opportunities to Northern Ireland.

Finally on the industrial sector, I should like to pay tribute to the progress made by the Province's two job promotion agencies, the Industrial Development Board and LEDU. In the year to 31 March 1985 both exceeded their targets for new job promotions. The IDB achieved 5,267, of which 4,719 were within home industry and 548 from new inward investment. Of the total of 5,267 new jobs, almost 3,400 were in companies with headquarters outside Northern Ireland.

I put that on record because, with the failures of De Lorean and Lear Fan, it is important to recognise that two thirds of the new jobs in Northern Ireland promoted by the IDB this year have been jobs in which the base owning companies are outside Northern Ireland. We want more gilt-edged companies of that type in the Province — those which are established in various countries, and whose efforts in Northern Ireland are part of a chain, not an experiment taking place in Northern Ireland and no other country. That is part of our policy and my determination at present.

LEDU achieved its best ever performance, with 4,009 jobs in the financial year 1984-85. That is an increase of 550 over the previous year.

Class II, vote 4, also makes provision for the development of tourism. The sum of £5·5 million is allocated to it. My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) is extremely interested in that, and let me know of his interest before the debate.

Indeed, at Question Time the right hon. Member for South Down and I paid tribute to tourism as an important factor in the earning of wealth and the provision of jobs. Some 10,000 full-time jobs are provided by tourism at present in the Province.

Class III, vote 1, totals £24·2 million. That includes £12 million for 1984-85 deficit support for the gas industry, £6·3 million for conversion scheme assistance and £5·8 million for other costs, of which the main element is redundancy payments. The £6·3 million for conversion grants assumes that substantial progress can be made this year in implementing the rundown programmes of the smaller gas undertakings. As already announced, the Government will pay the full cost of conversion to the cheapest alternative method of domestic energy.

I can also tell the House that industrial and commercial consumers will receive grant of 30 per cent. of the least-cost conversion or replacement. In setting the rate at 30 per cent., consideration was given to the fact that many industrial and commercial consumers would be able to claim tax relief in relation to capital expenditure, thus effectively reducing the net cost to the consumer. In addition, some industrial and commercial consumers may be able to apply for energy conservation grants. They will be advised on this by fuel technologists from the Department of Economic Development's industrial science division.

I should also say, because the matter has been raised from time to time by right hon. and hon. Members, that churches, which as charitable organisations do not pay rates, will be treated as domestic consumers. Therefore, the Government will cover their full costs of converting to the cheapest alternative appliances for central heating.

The £5·8 million for redundancy payments is a broad estimate of what might be required in 1985-86 if reasonable progress is made. The payments to individual workers will show considerable variations depending on the age, length of service and wages of employees. The Government will underwrite redundancy terms to the level of those paid by the British Gas Corporation — a significant enhancement over statutory redundancy terms. Employees aged over 50 can also participate in the local government superannuation scheme for early retirement benefits in addition to their redundancy lump sums.

I have previously spelt out the reasons why the Government could not support the rescue plan prepared on behalf of the gas industry joint working group. I very much regret that this had to be the decision, but, facing facts frankly, I had no alternative. I had to ask myself whether the proposal, as put to me, would lead to a viable gas industry; or whether heavy and ever-increasing demands on Northern Ireland's limited public expenditure resources would continue to be made in support of gas. This £12 million per annum subsidy covering only 2 per cent. of the energy produced in the Province has risen from £2 million a year in 1974 to 1980, to £10 million a year from 1980 to 1984, to £12 million a year now.

The plan would be viable only if gas consumption in Northern Ireland increased 10 times over, and this at a fuel cost one third to one half higher than that of solid fuel. Domestic central heating by gas in the Province would have to increase from the present 3 per cent. to 50 per cent. We also considered that costs of more than £70 million were underestimated. It is as well to remember that all the gas pipes in Northern Ireland are such that one fifth of the gas put in on production does not come out on completion —four times the leakage rate of Great Britain. They would need replacement if the gas industry were to continue.

Gas has had a question mark over it since 1977 at least, and a decision had to be made not to close the gas industry, but to say that the ever-rising subsidies would end and that we would pay for the rundown. Interestingly, one private gas company at Portadown, believing that it can continue to run at a profit or at least not at a loss, is continuing.

Turning to electricity, £95·6 million is being sought in the Estimates for payments to the Northern Ireland electricity service to compensate for the Government's present policy of pegging Northern Ireland electricity tariffs to the level of the highest in England and Wales. This necessitates a large subsidy from within the Northern Ireland public expenditure block. The burden is considerable and one which the Government view with increasing concern. There is a need to reduce NIES costs — in particular, fuel costs. Hence the recently announced plan to convert Kilroot power station fom oil to coal firing. The conversion is a major capital expenditure programme, involving some £94 million, which will take the station out of service in the years 1986 to 1988. After the station is recommissioned in 1989, we anticipate reductions in fuel costs of £25 million to £30 million per year. It will pay for itself within three to four years and represents significant public expenditure savings. It will be one of the most versatile generating stations on earth. It was originally oil-fired. It has switched to coal but remains capable of returning to oil and can switch to lignite in the future. It can be a tourist attraction as one of the most versatile electricity generating stations in discovered space. We are always looking for ways to increase morale in the Province.

We are also conscious of the contribution which local lignite might make to reducing generating costs elsewhere in the Province, and we are seeking detailed information on the planning, design and costings of a minemouth power station which will enable decisions to be made. The prospects for involving private sector investment in the development of lignite-fired electricity are also being examined.

Some other items will be dealt with by the Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), when he replies. They are his responsibility and he knows much more about them.

Roads and transport are covered in class IV of the Estimates. Northern Ireland has an excellent road system which is an important factor in the development of the Province's economy. There are about one third the number of cars per mile in the Province compared with the rest of Great Britain. That is an attraction to people moving around the Province as well as an advantage to industry and commerce. Some £22 million has been provided for new construction and £56 million for operation and maintenance, within an overall budget of £98 million.

In his statement of 12 December, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State reaffirmed housing as the highest priority among Northern Ireland's social and environmental programmes. Since the strategic approach to housing was agreed in 1981, total gross expenditure on housing services in Northern Ireland has grown from £325 million in 1980-81 to £545 million in 1985-86. Allowing for inflation this is a real increase of 22 per cent. A further review of the housing strategy undertaken in 1984 confirmed the validity of the switch in emphasis made in

[Dr. Rhodes Boyson]

1983 towards improvement and maintenance and concluded that for the future the main issues to be addressed concern housing conditions rather than overall supply. That is reflected in the provision which has been made for housing services in 1985-86. The Housing Executive's capital and revenue budgets for 1985-86, totalling over £500 million, make provision for expenditure of £78 million on the rehabilitation and improvement of the executive's existing housing stock. Only—I am sorry; I mean over—£52 million is for maintenance.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Only. The Minister was right the first time.

Dr. Boyson: Knowing how carefully my words are noted, I shall be careful when I start a sentence with a four-letter word. What we spend on one thing we cannot spend on another. A Government who have increased the amount by 22 per cent. have nothing to apologise for.

In gross terms some £42 million has been made available to housing associations for 1985-86, of which £26 million has been allocated to general housing association work to fund the completion of work already on the ground and a programme of 1,250 new starts.

In class VI, vote 1, over £78·6 million is sought for water and sewerage services throughout the Province. Of that amount, approximately £25 million is required for capital works. A major problem identified by a recent review of the future needs of the water service was the wastage of water with the percentage of water unaccounted for at some 30 per cent. of the total supply. An intensified programme of waste detection is expected to be fully under way by the end of 1985. We need to do that or to build another reservoir. The water leakage is almost as acute as the gas leakage, but I am told that it is easier to deal with. The gas leakage will not interest us in the future.

Class VIII of the Estimates seeks a total provision of over £614 million for education, libraries and arts. Some 37 per cent. of this provision relates to the payment of school teachers' salaries.

The cost of nursery education is provided for in class VIII—a total of over £3·5 million this year. I know that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley is concerned about this matter and intends to speak about it tonight. I shall listen with interest to what he has to say, and my hon. Friend will, of course, reply.

In class VIII, vote 2, where total provision of £106·5 million is sought for higher and further education, I am particularly pleased that provision has been made to start the development of the Magee campus of the university of Ulster. The capital cost of the project will be in the region of £6·5 million at today's prices. The full plan, which is to be implemented in three distinct phases, will provide approximately 750 additional places for higher education in Londonderry and will bring the total capacity of the Magee campus to 1,000.

Class IX provides for health and personal social services. A net total of £642 million is sought to maintain the services already provided, and to allow for their further development. The largest single element in vote 1 is the revenue expenditure of the health and social services boards, estimated at £521 million.

Finally, in class XI, a net total of £18·3 million of the £23·1 million is required to service Department of Finance and Personnel's central management functions such as resources control. The balance is to provide for the running costs of the Exchequer and Audit Department and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

I thought it right to go into some detail on Lear Fan and the gas industry, but generally I have tried to outline briefly the main features of the draft order, and to expand upon some of the main policy issues underlying the provision sought. I know that, as usual on these occasions, right hon. and hon. Members will wish to express their views on these and a great many other matters. I shall listen with great interest to the points raised by hon. Members, and my hon. Friend will reply.

9.27 pm

Mr. James Nicholson (Newry and Armagh): I wish to examine class V, which deals with housing, and to raise some matters that have affected my constituency for a considerable time.

The availability of renovation grants is causing concern. Many people find it difficult to qualify at one of the so-called entry points and that suggests to me that the conditions are too rigid, lack imagination and require a rethink.

I shall outline some of the difficulties that I have faced in dealing with constituents' problems. We seem to be getting different interpretations from the Housing Executive in different areas. More important, we are getting different interpretations from different grant officers in the same areas.

It is not acceptable to be informed by the Housing Executive grants department and its officer that they have learned a lot in recent years. One would expect that, but constituents are having to wait 12 months or even 24 months for approval for a renovation grant for a house that badly needs renovating. That causes serious concern.

Many houses which do not meet the so-called entry requirements badly need improvement. The owners cannot afford to carry out the work but unless they are in receipt of supplementary benefit or other state benefits they do not qualify for assistance at the higher rate. I have never understood how or why we have developed a system whereby people have to be in receipt of state benefits to be able to renovate houses, as I should have thought that people on such benefits would be in no position to consider renovating their dwellings.

I should make it clear that this is a personal view, but I have long believed that the system lacks proper balance. Many people who do not qualify for grant aid are encouraged to improve their houses, when, if they had the choice, they would opt to build new ones instead. I ask the Minister seriously to consider adopting a more balanced approach to renovation and new building so that those in a position to choose can set the cost of renovation against that of building a new house, including whatever size of grant is available. The difference between the two amounts would then be less than it is now, thus allowing people more realistic alternatives than they have at present.

The problems of Orlit houses, of which there are many in my constituency, were being discussed in the House long before I joined its ranks, but we are still nowhere near solving the problem and alleviating the plight of the tenants, many of whom have had to accept continual increases in rent. I ask that every effort be made to ensure that progress is more rapid than it has been so far. I believe —I have argued this with local officials of the Housing

Executive and I do not think that many disagree—that where possible the Housing Executive should sell the houses to the tenants at a price which reflects the condition of the houses. I believe that that would be more attractive both for the potential purchasers and for the Housing Executive. Many tenants of Orlit cottages in my area have told me that they do not want their houses to be pulled down and they do not wish to move elsewhere. They are content to stay in their present homes. I do not believe that sufficient consideration is given to that fact.

There is also growing dissatisfaction not just in my constituency but throughout Northern Ireland among Housing Executive tenants who keep their homes in an excellent state of repair but are awarded no consideration for that. That can no longer be acceptable to the vast majority of responsible citizens. Many estates in my area were built a very long time ago and require modernisation and rehabilitation, including rewiring and better heating systems. The tenants rightly insist that they should be given consideration, and I agree.

Tenants on some estates in Armagh city such as the Folly in Dobbins Grove and the Orangefield estate are angered when they see tenants who wreck the kitchens and bathrooms in their accommodation being transferred by the Housing Executive to new houses in other areas. When I am asked by tenants who have looked after their homes how the Housing Executive can justify neglecting them, yet helps tenants who have wrecked their houses, I find it impossible to justify.

Houses on an estate at Sinton Park in Tandragee are supposed to be equipped with a so-called kitchen-dinette. In fact, it is nothing of the sort, being too small to be of any use to the tenants. That estate requires modernising and improving.

I protest strongly on behalf of tenants living in houses on the Greenpark estate in Markethill. Their doors and windows are rotten and people have to stuff up holes, in the windows and elsewhere, with polythene. A rehabilitation scheme for that estate has been postponed for another 12 months. That is totally unacceptable to the people who live there, and I find it intolerable.

In Killylea there is an estate of old people's dwellings, and other houses in the main street, and Eskes Park which to this day have not had their roofs or walls insulated. Nor do they have proper heating systems. That, too, is an unacceptable state of affairs. The walkways to the houses are dangerous, yet we expect old people to walk on them. I cannot understand how contractors have been paid for some of the tarring that they are supposed to have done there. It is difficult to see what supervision the Housing Executive exercised before payment was made for that work.

We require a change of emphasis in the Housing Executive's policy, particularly to the rural areas. Northern Ireland does not end at the suburbs of Belfast. Other areas outside the main conurbations need improving. People who have been paying their rents as honourable and honest citizens are now demanding what they should have received years ago. "We want our homes brought up to an acceptable level. Why should others have had their houses improved, while ours have remained in this condition?" they are rightly asking.

Houses on the Mourneview estate at Tandragee have caused me to have much correspondence with the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security in recent months. That estate was built many years ago, before the motor car became popular, when most of the tenants used bicycles or walked. Tandragee council—long before the Housing Executive came into existence—constructed a green area in front of the houses so that people would have a pleasant aspect. That was all very well then, but today every household on that estate has a car. Some have two and I know of one that has three.

That area of what was green grass has been trampled on to such an extent that in the winter it has to be seen to be believed. The children from neighbouring estates find it an excellent track for their BMX bicycles. They tear through the mud and the residents have difficulty getting to their homes. The footpaths have been allowed in recent years to get into an atrocious state, with the flagstones so unbalanced as to be dangerous.

The Department of the Environment roads service informs me that it does not propose to spend money on the estate because such expenditure would result in no traffic benefit to the area. Meanwhile, the Housing Executive is willing to pay 50 per cent. of the cost of making improvements. The Department says that such improvements would not benefit through traffic, but the roads service cannot wash its hands of its responsibilities unless they are clearly defined as a Housing Executive responsibility. I should be quite happy for such improvements to be made the responsibility of the Housing Executive because it might be prepared to solve the problem. It is unacceptable that people should be asked to live in out-of-date accommodation.

Although I have said a few harsh words about it, at this stage I should like to say a few words in praise of the Housing Executive. It has tried to respond to the requests that have been made for housing repairs. Its response could have been better, but there has been an improvement.

Rates offices have been centralised throughout Northern Ireland. The rates office in Armagh city was closed and removed to Lurgan. Most of the people in the area would have gone to Armagh to pay their rates bills. Either they decided to pay them within the allotted time and to accept the discount that was offered or they decided to pay their bills outside the time limit and by waiting long enough, hoped that it would amount to more than the value of the discount.

Lurgan is not very far away but it is far enough away not to tempt anybody in the Armagh district to jump in his car and go to Lurgan to pay his rates bill. So they now pay their rates bills by post. One of my constituents paid his rates bill by post three days before he would have lost his discount, but the Post Office decided not to deliver his letter for four days. Therefore, he lost his discount. It ought to be possible for the postmark to be taken as a verification of payment having been made before the expiry of the discount period. May I ask the Minister of State seriously to consider that point?

The Minister of State referred eloquently to the excellent roads system in Northern Ireland. The Armagh county council left as an inheritance to the people of the county of Armagh a roads system that was second to none. But that cannot be said today. The main roads have deteriorated seriously. The byroads have gone beyond the stage of deteriorating; some of them are beginning to break up.

There are all sorts of problems. I do not propose to deal with them at any length, because that would take up so much time that I might deprive another hon. Member of the opportunity to speak. However, I am seriously

[Mr. James Nicholson]

concerned about road conditions in Northern Ireland as a whole, and particularly in my constituency. I am also concerned about minor roads and voiced my concerns about them before I became a Member of Parliament.

One road in Armagh was first known as the road to nowhere. Now it services a housing estate, but it has never been finished. It was designed as a link road between the Markethill road and the Portadown road, and was supposed to cross the Hamiltonsbawn road. That road was never completed to a point at which it could at least provide some assistance. Thus, I hope that the Minister will seriously consider the fact that the road needs to be finished.

We have a good industrial estate on the Hamiltonsbawn road. It needs to be serviced and needs further work to be done so that more jobs can be brought to the Armagh city area. If there are no roads to such estates, we cannot expect industrialists to give them serious consideration. The Minister must give that point top priority in future.

The Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), need not look so worried, as I shall now deal with class I. I know how proficient he is on agriculture, as I have heard him reply in the past in the House. Farm capital grants are important to our farmers. Indeed, it would be fair to say that in Northern Ireland we have in the past used the grants available to improve and modernise our farm buildings. But even more importantly, improvements to our grasslands by re-seeding, shoring and cleaning out drains have benefited the whole agriculture industry. When the grants were drastically cut last December, there was some alarm. Of the £40 million saved from those cuts in the United Kingdom, £14 million will come out of money that would have gone to Northern Ireland. That shows the importance that Northern Ireland attaches to the grant system and the use to which it can be put.

Some counties require an on-going drainage policy. County Fermanagh is an excellent example of where such a policy has improved the land and subsequently the livelihood of farmers in that area.

I am very concerned that areas that have been substantially improved in previous years will now deteriorate. The view now appears to have entered Government thinking that the removal of hedges has been in some way uniform throughout the United Kingdom, but that is not so. Anyone who has been to Northern Ireland will know that conservation has always been of paramount importance to Northern Ireland farmers. We have not been guilty of damaging conservation, and could not be accused of that. The Minister's colleagues may not be as aware as he is of the different circumstances prevailing in Northern Ireland. We need an on-going policy of improvements to grasslands in Northern Ireland.

If agriculture is to develop, research and development must continue to receive the necessary support. There must be no diminuition in the current standards. We would be opposed to the reduction of any of the current services offered by our experimental stations, veterinary research laboratories, plant breeding stations and many of the other services. Major companies presently take part in some of the work carried out by Government Departments, and while such a policy should be encouraged where feasible, it should never be considered to be capable of taking over from what currently exists.

Production of beef in Northern Ireland provides great support not only for the farmer but for ancillary industries, mainly in the boning of beef. Agriculture in Northern Ireland must look towards preparation and marketing to give the housewives what they wish to buy. That aspect has been sadly lacking over the years. However, that requirement now seems to be recognised. If we are to survive in the comparative market of the large multiples buying the highest quality at comparative prices, there is much to be done on marketing. We still have a great deal to learn if we are to compete effectively with the continent. To that end, I urge the Government to maximise their efforts in helping our firms to initiate new ideas, evolve new markets and adopt new ideas to the benefit of the industry.

One requirement has been sadly neglected for some time—cold storage and blast freezing facilities. Due to the large supply of cattle available in the autumn, intervention is required to stabilise the market, but intervention is of little consequence if there is no storage space. I understand that the stores are now almost full. If that is true—I have no reason to suppose otherwise—that does not hold out much hope for the coming season. We experienced problems last autumn but, thankfully, we coped. We may not be so successful this year.

I ask the Minister to give serious consideration to providing alternative facilities. I fall short of saying what we said 12 months ago, when we requested that freezer ships should be made available. But that is something that the Minister must seriously consider, because that facility may be required this year in view of the additional cow beef that has filled our cold stores. The Minister should not hope for the best—he should prepare for the worst.

Since I came to the House two years ago, I have repeatedly said that some way must be found to bring to Northern Ireland at a realistic price the grain that is currently housed in costly intervention storage in Europe. It should not be beyond the scope of our Ministers and officials to negotiate within the CAP a way in which grain could be shipped to Northern Ireland, stored and sold to Northern Ireland farmers at a price no more or less than that in any other part of the United Kingdom. Such an initiative would immediately stabilise the intensive sector and would be of great help in creating further employment in the ancillary and support industries that supply it. I urge the Minister to take the necessary initiative to ensure that the problem is seriously considered.

I apologise to the Minister for not having been in the Chamber to hear his opening remarks on milk quotas. Like many other hon. Members, I was taken by surprise by the speed with which the previous debate ended. The issue of milk quotas has caused those of us who present the Northern Ireland agriculture case a great deal of concern, and we have spent much time trying to find a solution to the problem.

The problem was created by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. When quotas were first introduced 14 months ago, Northern Ireland should have been awarded 65,000 tonnes in recognition of its dependence upon the milk industry. That would have placed Northern Ireland farmers in an interim position between the Republic of Ireland and the remainder of the United Kingdom.

That is the background to the position. However, now the dairy farmers of Northern Ireland are at a serious disadvantage compared to their counterparts in the rest of

the United Kingdom. Not only did they not receive the 65,000 tonnes that we were awarded, but we were manipulated out of the commitment by a jumbling of figures to suit the *requirements of the Ministry of* Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The Minister introduced throughout the whole of the United Kingdom a milk cessation scheme whereby farmers could, if they wished, sell their quota back to the Ministry and go out of production. That extra quota could then be redistributed. In England and Scotland the scheme received a favourable response, but not in Wales, where in many ways the position of the farmers is similar to that of those in Northern Ireland. The target set for milk quotas has almost been reached on the mainland, but not in Northern Ireland, because the scheme there was a flop.

When the Minister of Agriculture made his announcement offering the scheme as a solution to the difficulties in Northern Ireland, he did not heed the warnings given by myself and other hon. Members that the scheme would not work. It never had a chance to work, because in Northern Ireland the farmers have no alternative. They cannot turn to cereals as farmers in other parts of the United Kingdom can. It has been suggested that other choices are available—we could grow rape, flax, peas and, unbelievably, caravans.

In Northern Ireland, we depend mainly on the grass-based sections of milk, beef and, to a lesser extent, sheep, those involved cannot sell their quota and go out of production. Our dependence on this sector is now more pronounced than ever. The dairy produce panels set up with the approval of the House to help farmers in the United Kingdom as a whole and to investigate their appeals is now working to the detriment of one part of the United Kingdom.

The same legislation and criteria should be used throughout the United Kingdom. Recently, the Minister announced that dairy farmers in England, Scotland and Wales are to receive 100 per cent. of their exceptional hardship awards, but in Northern Ireland they are to receive only 36 per cent. In England, Wales and Scotland, the small producer of 200,000 litres is to receive an extra 11 per cent. over the next 12 months, but in Northern Ireland, he is to receive nothing.

Such treatment is unacceptable to Northern Ireland. It is wrong that a farmer living in England, Scotland or Wales should be 11 per cent. better off than his counterpart in Northern Ireland, who is in the same circumstances but who, because he farms in the Province, will not receive equal treatment. Northern Ireland farmers have been told to cut milk production by 1 per cent. from 1 April, but small farmers in the rest of the United Kingdom are 11 per cent. better off.

It was fair 14 months ago to equalise the hardship, and the Government have a duty now to ensure that all citizens receive the same benefit. There is no difference in being an exceptional hardship case in the county of Armagh, part of which I have the honour to represent, and being an exceptional hardship case in the county of Devon. Hardship is the same wherever one happens to live. No justice or fair treatment has been accorded to Northern Ireland farmers on this issue. Tonight I am asking for that —nothing more or less than equality will suffice.

9.59 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I want to refer to a matter that has just been dealt with by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Nicholson) in regard to the Department of Agriculture. Lord Lyell, who is responsible for agriculture, advised us that expander cases in Northern Ireland would receive 49 per cent. of tribunal awards. In Scotland they will receive 57·5 per cent. and in England and Wales 65 per cent. If the outgoers quota is used exclusively for exceptional hardship cases and additional quota is not transferred from Great Britain awards of 36 per cent. will be granted.

The Secretary of State for Agriculture announced on 7 May that exceptional hardship cases in England and Wales would receive 100 per cent. of the tribunal award. Small producers in England and Wales will be restored to their mean level of production in 1983 but again, unless quota is transferred from Great Britain, small producers in Northern Ireland will receive absolutely nothing.

It is all very well for the Minister of State to come to the Dispatch Box tonight and tell us that he cannot make further comment. What are the dairy farmers of Northern Ireland to do? Lord Lyell told the Ulster Farmers Union on 2 May:

"I would wish to register my most sincere sympathy with all those who still do not know how they stand for 1985-86. I can only assure you that I am doing everything I can to get a fair settlement as quickly as possible."

The dairy farmers of Northern Ireland deserve not sympathy but action, and action needs to be taken immediately. We are in an intolerable position when we discover that the Minister who will be answering tonight can make no statement about further progress on the matter while the rest of the United Kingdom gets full information. There is no equality between the rest of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) should be well briefed so that he can give some satisfaction to the people of Northern Ireland.

I wish to protest at the limitation on the time available for the debate. Why can we not have proper time to discuss matters that range from Dan to Beersheba? It makes me thank God doubly for an Assembly, where we have time to discuss some of the matters that should have been dealt with in the House tonight. We have a deplorable state of affairs.

When I arrived at the House today I had a telephone call from a lady in County Antrim who told me that she could not get any satisfaction from the Department of Agriculture in Northern Ireland or from the Department here. Therefore, she sent to Mr. Andriessen, the Commissioner for Agriculture in Brussels, a long telex which cost her £60. This is a serious matter because the dairy farmers do not know where to turn. They may have 100 or 120 cows and they are being told that they will have to cut back. They do not know how they will make ends meet. Mr. Andriessen replied to this lady. She got no reply from the Prime Minister or from the Secretary of State for Agriculture, both of whom she had written to. She was ignored by them but the Common Market Commissioner replied. He said that he had instructed

"my services to get in touch with the United Kingdom so that further details and a proper explanation be obtained of the way that hardship quotas and other special case quotas are now being determined in Northern Ireland differing from the rest of the United Kingdom".

The alarm bells are sounding in Europe because of the way in which the Secretary of State dealt with the 65,000 extra tonnes that we should have received last year.

What is happening is deplorable. It is so bad that it would be impossible to believe if Lord Lyell had not

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

appeared before the Northern Ireland Agriculture Committee to confirm in person what I am saying tonight. He said that the only answer lay in the permanent transfer of quota from Great Britain, but that there was very strong opposition to this from producers in England, Scotland and Wales. In other words, those producers are not prepared to stand for equalisation and Northern Ireland has to be put out on a limb.

Northern Ireland's prime agriculture industry has to suffer because the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has ceased to be the Minister responsible for the whole of the United Kingdom. He has become responsible only for England and Wales. He is doing something for his own farmers but nothing for farmers in Northern Ireland.

It was obvious to the Agriculture Committee that that would be so. Indeed, we put it to Lord Lyell that a political decision would have to be taken to transfer quotas from producers across the water.

I am sure that the leader of the Official Unionist party will not mind me saying that he has received correspondence from the Prime Minister on the same subject. I have also written to the Prime Minister about the problem. Lord Lyell told us that the Secretary of State had been negotiating at Cabinet level and that we would have to leave it to him to fight the political battle.

Representatives of the Ulster Farmers Union came away from a meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and immediately passed a vote of no confidence in him because he offered no change and no hope.

I appeal to Ministers to convey to Lord Lyell and to the Secretary of State that time is running out. In the past two weeks we have heard that producers in the Republic of Ireland have received an additional 58,000 tonnes. In England and Wales there has been a restoration of the 1983 levels of production and claims by essential hardship cases will be met in full.

It is time for Northern Ireland's position to be resolved. We must receive the full benefit of the European Economic Community award of 65,000 tonnes. It must be seen that we receive that award. Surely Ministers have learnt their lessons by now. There must be a permanent transfer of quota within the United Kingdom to protect the jobs of those for whom alternative employment is not available. There are no alternative jobs for farmers. We have a grass, land-based industry.

Mr. Nicholson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we can thank membership of the EC for our present position, and for having ruined our intensive sectors, thus making us so dependent on the grass-based sectors?

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Gentleman knows my views about Europe. I warned the Ulster Farmers Union, but they went against me and said that Europe would be the greatest thing that ever happened. The leaders of the farming community in Northern Ireland campaigned to go into Europe. The farming community was warned about what would happen. What annoys me is that Europe has given us extra and we are not getting it. It is hard for the farmers of Northern Ireland to accept that producers in the Republic will be so much better off than we are. But how much worse it is now for those in agriculture in Northern Ireland to find that matters cannot be resolved on an equitable basis within the United Kingdom, that we are not getting our place as farmers within the United Kingdom, that we are being discriminated against. There must be a realisation of the inequities between producers in the United Kingdom.

Justice surely demands that quota purchased from outgoers should be used equitably throughout the country. The Government cannot say that the money is not available, because the money is available. They were to purchase 66 million litres, and they have been able to purchase only 12 million litres. They have £7 million in hand to pay for this. That money must be used to get extra milk quota for Northern Ireland. The money is available. A simple calculation shows that a total of £7 million is unspent. The Government must make that money available for milk quota.

I leave it to the Minister to reply on milk quotas when he sums up, and to give some hope to the farmers of Northern Ireland. I do not want him to say that he is sorry, he can do nothing and he has nothing to say to me, because that will inflict more misery and take away any hope that there may be in the hearts of the farmers of Northern Ireland.

There are many other agricultural matters on which I would like to comment, but many other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate and some have been waiting since 7 o'clock. I will, therefore, curtail my remarks.

I welcome the statement of the Minister of State that there is absolutely no criticism of the workmanship of the people of Northern Ireland in the De Lorean case or in the Lear Fan affair. These companies coming in and making a botch has caused a reflection to be cast across the world suggesting that there is something wrong with Ulster workmanship. There is nothing wrong with Ulster workmanship. I welcome this statement by the Minister, and he needs to go on repeating it, because no reflection can be cast on Ulster workmanship.

I welcome the progress that has been made in Shorts and in the Shipyard, and I welcome the jobs that are coming to Northern Ireland. There is a lot of work to be done, and the IDB and those responsible need to get their skates on and get at this job with all their might.

I wish to ask some questions on class IV, the Department of the Environment. Can the Minister give the House a recent updating in regard to Ballintoy harbour? I thank the Minister for what he told me about the Kilkeal dredger. I want to say that I was not going into the constituency of any hon. Member. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Nicholson) and I at a meeting in Stormont were asked to bring this matter to the House. As chairman, I was asked to do this, and that is why I did it. When hon. Members came into my constituency at the time of the discussion of the barracks at Ballymena, I did not protest. If hon. Members come in and help my constituency to get better and more jobs, more power to them. It is the same if they come into Shorts in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson). Nobody will hinder me. When representations are made to me as chairman of the committee in Stormont to raise matters in the House, I will raise them.

I welcome the fact that the Minister gave us the report, but we had already had it from the chairman of the fisheries board in Northern Ireland who came and told us what had happened. Nevertheless, we welcome the announcement today.

I want the Minister to tell us about the updating of Ballintoy harbour. Extensive works have been done there, but the project has developed into a fiasco resulting almost in the closing of the harbour because of the way that the work has been carried out. Will he also say what progress has been made on Rathlin island harbour and on the Ballycastle harbour project as these are very important to my constituency?

Class V deals with housing. I want to ask the Minister to start an investigation into why houses of the same age and of the same construction and size in one area in Northern Ireland get more done to them when they are being rehabilitated than the same type of houses in other areas.

I refer to Cookstown and to Ballymoney. There, two estates are made up of exactly the same type of house, but the political connotations are different. One is Republican and the other Unionist. One is Roman Catholic and the other Protestant. A tenant goes to the estate office and is told, "We are sorry, but you are not getting a new window here and a new door there and you will not have this or that fixed. At the end of the day, people in Ballymoney found that inferior jobs were being done on their houses and less money was spent on them although their houses were in a worse condition than those in Cookstown.

I have had the Housing Executive on this job, because the only way to deal with the Housing Executive is to take its representatives to an estate and allow the tenants to get at them. That is my policy. I allow them to say what they have to say to the Housing Executive in the presence of their Member of Parliament. I got promises galore that all would be well. However, I was summoned back and the tenants told me that they were getting nothing and that the Housing Executive representatives had gone back on their agreement. I say to the Minister that what is fair must be done in Northern Ireland.

I resent the fact that in my constituency Republican housing estates get preference over Unionist estates. They should all be dealt with in the same way. Instead, Republicans destroy their properties, they refuse to pay rent, they go on rent strikes and, when renovations are to be done, the Housing Executive says that their houses are in worse condition and that work on them must be done first.

Good tenants in Housing Executive property must be given some incentives. I understand that the Government believe in incentives, as I do. A good tenant who keeps his house well, does the odd repair without fuss and keeps it in good repair should be given some incentive. I am disgusted by the way that some of these rehabilitation jobs are done. Tenants are put out for a few weeks, but they are brought back before the jobs are finished. Other tenants are kept in their houses and have to endure all the inconvenience. I went into a house the other day where the occupants were going to bed after performing a balancing act over the rafters of the floor. That was a rehabilitation job. That is not fair to anyone, and the Minister should see that it does not happen.

Class VI deals with historic monuments, and I have two questions for the Minister. The first concerns the Walker monument in the city of Londonderry. Incidentally, I congratulate the Minister on calling it "the city of Londonderry". Because we have murdering thugs as members on the council, is the planning for that monument to stop, with the project being called to a halt?

I want also to ask the hon. Gentleman about the monument to the Rev. Hugh Hanna that used to stand at Carlisle circus. What has happened to it? Why has the monument not been restored to its rightful place now that the roads in the area have been sorted out?

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): While my hon. Friend talks about monuments, will he give the Minister the opportunity to tell us what is delaying the cleaning of the Carson monument which is on the route to my hon. Friend's offices and which he must see and deplore every day, as it is turning green and corroded?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I thought that my hon. Friend would speak in the debate and I knew that he, as chairman of the committee in Stormont, had made representations about that matter, which is why I did not mention it. We could not get a better trio than Walker, Hanna and Carson and, therefore, I trust that those three names will stick in the mind of the hon. Gentleman the Member for Bath and that he will remember that that monument of Carson needs a bath. Perhaps he will look after that for us.

Regarding class VIII, I register my strongest protest against the decision that Northern Ireland will have something less than the rest of the United Kingdom in that we are not to have a Provincial library or copyright privilege for our central library. It was proposed that we should have a Provincewide reference library and a copyright privilege. Only one library in Ireland has that copyright privilege—the university library in Dublin. Why should a library outside the United Kingdom have that privilege when it is denied to the people of Northern Ireland? Wales, Scotland and England all have their own national library. Why should Northern Ireland not have one to serve the entire Province? I regret that it has been refused to us. Will the Minister tell us why?

I wonder whether the Minister will tell us what is happening about hospitals at Downpatrick. All hon. Members have deputations with them about that. I hope that the Minister will update us on that.

Class XI vote 4 deals with the expenditure of the office of the Northern Ireland Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. Will the Minister take on board the fact that a small leaflet is needed to state clearly how many cases have been brought since the two offices came into existence? How many cases have been sifted through, tried and a verdict given? What was the religious discrimination and what were the numbers? Those numbers are vital to show that the vast claims of discrimination simply do not stand up. It is time that the facts were published so that everyone knows what is happening.

One of the classes refers to the contributions to local revenues. I think that I can deal with this matter in class IV vote 6. The Minister knows what has happened as a result of the Northern Ireland local government elections. I do not want the Government to think that the problem will go away. Sinn Fein is wholly unacceptable to the people of Northern Ireland. To have to sit on a council and have councillors shouting, "Up the IRA", and calling our security forces murderers, and to know that Sinn Fein has killed our kith and kin is something that we shall never accept. The Government need to get that into their mind. If they think that in two or three months, or a year, the position will settle down, everyone will shake hands and work together, they are wrong. If the Minister thinks that

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

he can push Sinn Fein down our teeth, he has another think coming. The Government need to get that into their mind and heart. What they have seen so far is only a Sunday school picnic. Our people are enraged at what has happened. The Minister and the Government will not sit with Sinn Fein, discuss business with them, or have them on deputations, yet they would force the elected representatives of Northern Ireland to sit with them. It cannot be done. I hope that when the Minister replies, he will clarify the statement that he is reported to have made, on which there has been great comment, that he would have to recognise the chairman of a council even if he was a member of Sinn Fein. What is the Government's thinking on that? If a council such as that in Omagh sends him a deputation led by a Sinn Fein chairman, will he receive it? If he goes to Omagh, will he be received by a Sinn Fein chairman?

Those are urgent matters, and the House had better understand the feeling of the people of Northern Ireland. I cannot express it strongly enough. I have already expressed it to the Minister in person. This cannot be swept under the carpet, and it will be opposed by the people of Northern Ireland. In Enniskillin—I regret that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) is not here tonight — the official Unionists were prepared to vote into office an SDLP man to keep Sinn Fein out of the chair, but the SDLP said, "We will not even run for office. We will let Sinn Fein have the chair." We know what the end of the story will be. I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet, but at the next general election, we shall see the real pact between the SDLP and Sinn Fein. I believe that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) said in the House that we are seeing the forging of another all-Republican pact. The House must be warned about it and about the feelings of Ulster people.

10.26 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): It may seem a poor response to the witty and informative speech with which the Minister of State introduced the order if he is obliged once again to listen to a litany to which he has already on three separate occasions made some reply. All of us hope — that hope is reinforced by the absurdly limited time for this debate — that this will be the last occasion when we must reap the absurd fruits in procedural terms of the old determination to maintain a separate financial organisation and Consolidated Fund for Northern Ireland.

It would be unreasonable to expect Ministers to anticipate what we believe the Government will say if, later this month or at the beginning of July, they must once again excuse the renewal of direct rule. Equally, I am sure that Ministers will understand that right hon. and hon. Members on this Bench, who were returned to the House to bring about the end of that colonial status of direct rule under which the Province labours, would be falling if they did not mark their purpose again by formally voting against the order.

As a result of a communication between us, the Minister of State anticipated one point that I shall raise this evening. I am grateful to him for recognising that the Northern Ireland Office and the fisheries division of the Department of Agriculture are alive to the risks to the scallop fishermen on the Down and Antrim coasts. Something went wrong somewhere.

In the early months of 1984, it was proposed that the entire northern part of the Irish sea should reasonably, for conservation reasons, be closed to scallop fishing for four months from June to October. That was accepted by the Northern Ireland fishermen and their representatives. However, when the order was made, it excluded from the ban the coastal scallop beds of the counties of Antrim and Down. That is an extremely serious matter, for there are fishermen in the smaller ports of those two counties who are dependent for a considerable part of their livelihood upon the special scallop fishery to which their fishing methods are adapted off their own home ports. If, during this close season, which does not apply off Mourne and Antrim, part of the fishing effort of the remainder of the Irish sea proves to be concentrated, as is feared, upon those beds, there may be disastrous consequences from which those resources may take years to recover.

I hope that when the Minister replies, he will be able to reiterate more precisely the pledge which was given by the Minister of State that the Government will stand ready, if there is any evidence of incursion into those fisheries, to extend the ban which exists in the remainder of the northern Irish sea. I believe that I caught an affirmative indication. I shall look forward to hearing it verbally when the Minister replies.

The other matter that I wish to raise concerns the Minister's responsibilities for the Department of the Environment. One of the few functions—I hope that it will soon be widely extended — of the existing local authorities in Northern Ireland is the disposal of refuse. I am not for one moment suggesting that that function should be taken away from them. We should be looking for functions that can be given to, not taken away from, district councils. I am not the only Member representing Northern Ireland who has been disturbed by the evidence of the sporadic efforts of the different district councils to solve their problems of tipping and rubbish disposal in apparent isolation from what other councils may be doing and without any connected plan or forethought as to what the demand in future years will be.

There is a function here for the Department of the Environment. It is a function that the Department would have even if we in Northern Ireland possessed, as we hope to possess, a full system of local government—that is, of co-ordination and stimulus. The district councils ought, each in their respective areas, not merely to be encouraged but to be required to provide the Minister with a forecast of the expected disposal requirements of coming years and their intentions for coping with their problems. There should be a survey of the manner in which the total requirements of the Province in coming years can be met without any breach of planning requirements or damage to amenities.

At present, the district council picks upon a site, causing widespread alarm and dismay in the area, and puts in a planning application for its use as a tipping site. After many months, a decision is rightly taken that it is not a suitable site and the same blight lands in another place.

It is absurd that that should be going on simultaneously in one district area after another, and it is only the Minister and officials in his Department, with their oversight of local government and environmental functions, who can deal with that problem.

I know that it has been brought to the Minister's attention, but I hope that he will tonight say that he will not allow district councils to prevaricate, but will insist by a given date on having an intelligent and intelligible plan for the next 10 years of refuse disposal throughout the Province. The matter needs to be looked at Province-wide and on that scale.

As the Minister with responsibility for the Department of the Environment is to reply and as housing has been mentioned more than once, I cannot resist returning to one point which was touched upon by the Minister of State when he referred to the change in emphasis which had taken place in the activities of the Housing Executive. The emphasis has changed from new building and addition to the total stock to improvement, maintenance and the improvement of the distribution of existing stock.

Year after year, we have called for — and then welcomed—that change of emphasis. I know that it has the full support of the Under-Secretary and it is, therefore, a cause of dismay to find in one's own constituency that the Housing Executive is apparently still contemplating vesting large areas to create new and, in some cases, massive estates. Will the Under-Secretary put in hand an inquiry to see what sites for new building are being acquired by the Housing Executive outside Belfast and how those acquisitions are related to the policy of the executive, as it has been expounded to the House in successive debates? Some of us suspect that the Housing Executive, or certainly some of its departments, may be failing to respond to the general policy of shifting the emphasis from the creation of new housing estates to the maintenance and improvement of existing houses and the facilitation of transfers so that families match the accommodation much better than they do at present.

I know that I am appealing for something which is close to the Under-Secretary's heart, and I hope that he will emphasise that when he replies.

10.36 pm

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) has announced that the House will again be divided. I regret that, if only because it separates him and his right hon. and hon. Friends from Conservative Members who wish them well.

Northern Ireland is fortunate in the devotion and energy of the Secretary of State and his ministerial team. If I pay a particular compliment to the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson), it is because I wish to speak about tourism, which falls within the purview of the Department of Economic Development and is a subject in which my hon. Friend takes a keen personal interest.

Expenditure on the development of tourism in the last financial year is recorded in class II, vote 4. The fact that a surplus of over £213,000 is to be returned is indicative of prudent administration. The Minister of State said that in the present financial year there will be expenditure of £5·5 million. The question is whether we are getting value for that money.

In 1967, about 1·8 million tourists visited Northern Ireland. Then came the troubles. A low point was recorded in 1981, with only 588,000 tourist visitors. By last year, there had been a remarkable change for the better—to 908,000 tourists, an increase of 6 per cent. on 1983 figures and 27 per cent. up on the 1982 level. There was also last year the highest occupancy rate of hotel bedrooms—40 per cent.—since 1973. I saw that the Minister of State was quoted as predicting that the 1 million tourists mark will be passed this year, although, as that will not take us back to the pre-troubles level, we cannot rest content.

Northern Ireland is fortunate in Sir John Swinson, who was reappointed chairman of the tourist board in 1983. He and his officials have been busy promoting Northern Ireland in London, Birmingham, Scotland and West Germany—the earnest anglers from Germany love the Fermanagh lakes.

Northern Ireland has been receiving about 52,000 tourists a year from North America, many of whom come because of their roots in Northern Ireland. It is estimated that 20 million North Americans, 850,000 Australians and no fewer than 200,000 New Zealanders consider themselves, as I do, to have ancestral origins in the Province. It was wise of the Northern Ireland tourist board to carry out a promotional tour of Australiasia last October. It is also gratifying that more Members of this House are visiting Northern Ireland.

Many new visitors to the Province express surprise at the tranquillity of the matchless countryside and at the normality of Ulster life. Terrorism is there, but terrorism is almost worldwide in what Churchill described as this terrible 20th century. The British are insular and inclined to think that they are the only people who have troubles, whether it be unemployment or terrorism. Other countries much favoured by holidaymakers — France, including Corsica, as well as Italy and Spain — are also and perhaps worse plagued by the men of the bomb and the bullet. Statistical comparison shows that Northern Ireland is much safer than New York and we should do all that we can to encourage further growth of the tourist industry by bringing out the true position of Northern Ireland. Due regard must at the same time be paid to natural amenity, historic monuments and archaeological sites such as the one in the constituency of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Nicholson) which I understand is to be the subject of a public inquiry.

I repeat that we cannot rest on our oars. I suppose that the fact that only 300,000 visitors come from Great Britain results from the concentration of our media on the killing and the violence. That figure compares with 350,000 from the Irish Republic. Tourism figures in the cross-border studies and co-operation with Bord Failte makes sense. I conclude by quoting Mr. De Valera, no less, who described Ulster as the province that every Irishman loves most next to his own.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I am grateful for the co-operation of Members on both sides of the House. It may help the House if I say that the Minister is anxious to catch my eye at 11.15 pm, so I appeal for even more brevity.

10.42 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I shall seek to follow your grave consign, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall limit my comments to one aspect of the Minister's opening remarks and not seek to equal the interesting, in-depth speeches of hon. Members who have gone before me.

I wish to deal briefly with the scrapping of the Lear Fan jet project, which the Minister described as disappointing

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

news. The Minister told the House that the 4·79 million dollars outstanding would not now have to be paid. Great effort has been made to distance this matter from the De Lorean affair, which was the subject of a previous debate, but it is right and proper that the House should also discuss the Lear Fan affair in some depth, and I shall seek to do so, albeit briefly.

The Lear Fan jet was to be made almost entirely of a lightweight carbon fibre, powered by two turbo-prop engines coupled to a single rear propellor and designed to fly at speeds of up to 400 mph using less fuel than some cars; but the project has now been scrapped. It is significant that the announcement of the decision came not from the Industrial Development Board but from Lear Fan Ltd. in Los Angeles. In a written answer to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Mr. Arnold) about the Lear Fan company's decision to cease trading, the Minister said:

"I understand the directors took this decision because of continuing delays encountered in obtaining certification of the Lear Fan 2100 aircraft and the steep decline in the market for executive turbo-prop aircraft which had resulted in a serious deterioration of the long-term prospects of the company." —[*Official Report*, 3 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. *86*.]

However, I suggest that the Lear Fan project collapsed because of the inability of Lear Fan to get an airworthiness certificate. Thus, the second reason given by the company is as redundant as those workers who are still at the plant in Carnmoney in Northern Ireland.

The Minister is to be congratulated on being forthright with the House in saying that £56·28 million had been lost to the Exchequer. Lord Lyell—whom the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) described as being the Minister responsible for agriculture—referred to the losses in a statement that he made in the other place on 19 December 1984. He thought that the Government exposure was $24 million. That was obviously wishful thinking, because the proper figure given tonight by the Minister is £56·28 million.

As with the De Lorean affair, the Lear Fan issue raises a number of questions. Most of my questions relate to the administration of the former Minister of State, the present Minister of State for Defence Procurement, to whom I have given notice that I should be raising matters within his jurisdiction.

Why, in the first place, were the contracts for Lear Fan entered into in dollars, which meant that, with a strengthening dollar, the transaction across the exchanges cost us more than was necessary? Is it right that the Government should have used taxpayers' money in dollars rather than in pounds? What chances are there of recovering as much as possible of the nearly £57 million that has been poured into the venture? Is it a fact, as stated in the press, that the Industrial Development Board's directors nominated to advise the Government recommended the Government to pull out of the Lear Fan project a year ago and to salvage what money could be recouped? If so, why was that advice not heeded?

Is it true that there is a legal possibility on the other side of the Atlantic that the Lear Fan company might be able somehow to close down the present operations, lose for the British Exchequer £57 million and open up again with other backers? In short, is it still thought that the Lear Fan jet is a marketable commodity?

I read that Mr. De Lorean is seeking to resurrect his car project in the United States and therefore, in a sense, begin where he left off in Northern Ireland. I doubt whether that is so; and if I do not believe in miracles, I can believe in the gullibility of some people elsewhere in the world.

Why did the Government take a 5 per cent. equity stake in Fan Holdings Incorporated, which in turn owned Lear Fan Ltd.? What was the value of such a parsimonious holding? Why were the original interim loans waived in favour of royalty payments of up to $33·75 million?

We see here the shades of the De Lorean affair: a plan for a jet aircraft that had no prospect of obtaining an airworthiness certificate, yet the British Government bartered away taxpayers' money for royalty payments on an aeroplane that was destined never to fly.

Why was the original loan, which might have been recovered by the receiver in different circumstances, turned into a per capita employment grant to be secured against the achievement of the original Northern Ireland employment target of 1,250? By means of this debate I draw the attention of the receiver to the novelty of a situation in which a loan was to be converted into a grant on the achievement of an employment target of 1,250. That employment figure was never achieved, so £9·07 million could be recovered by the Exchequer.

Why did Her Majesty's Government waive their right to recover the original grant, and upon what financial criteria was this decision based? If additional assistance was to be linked to an increase in the number of employees above 1,250, why was that assistance given when there was no — I repeat no — increase in the number of employees above that figure? In fact, the number of workers employed on the Lear Fan project never rose above 560. If the Government had decided that no financial assistance should be provided unless it was linked to jobs, why did they agree to extend a bank guarantee totalling $15 million to 31 December 1986 and to provide additional public funds up to a maximum of $30 million in what they described as

"a predetermined ratio with private sector money"?

It was a question not of throwing good money after bad but of throwing good taxpayers' money after private investment capital and relying upon the judgment of the private investor to get it right. That is a matter that the Government and the Industrial Development Board ought to take on board. It is not sufficient simply to say that private money should be added to any particular project, because that, too, might not be backed up by expertise. Where was the expertise on carbon fibre, on aviation fuel consumption or on private jet market research? The British public are entitled to be told the criteria for such an investment.

I was as much surprised in this case as I was in the case of De Lorean to see who were the people who influenced the Government of the day. The greatest enthusiast for the scheme was the wife of the inventor. She had no financial, commercial or aircraft expertise that was worthy of the attention of the British taxpayer. Even Mrs. Lear had to confess in 1981 that the company was over its budget and behind schedule. What was the Government's response? They appointed a new chairman who was an independent oil operator and a banker from Denver, Colorado. Where was his aircraft expertise?

The Government announced that any new funding of the Lear Fan project was to be by way of a secured loan, the security being the premises in Northern Ireland which, in a sense, belonged to the taxpayer and which were meaningless in terms of collateral. Even then the

Government hinted that such a loan would be set off against further grants. These are all matters for the Public Accounts Committee, which looked very carefully into the De Lorean affair and threw light on a number of corners that required light to be shed upon them. It must be the same here. Any analysis of this project shows clearly that there has been a waste of taxpayers' money, a waste that has been brought about by Government incompetence, ignorance and mismanagement. The only good thing to be said is that it cannot be laid at the door of the present Minister, who was not in post at the time. But it can be laid at the door of the Government of whom he is a member.

If the Minister cannot be held responsible for the financial arrangements made by his predecessor in 1982, he does hold some responsibility for the wayward fashion in which announcements have been made concerning the cessation of trading of Lear Fan. The Opposition sometimes offer the Government a fair wind —to borrow a phrase from my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock)—if not an entirely bipartisan policy when we deal with Northern Ireland matters. But we categorically condemn the Government for the cavalier, inopportune and, quite frankly, callous way in which important announcements concerning employment are made out of this House, out of the reach of the probing questions of Members of Parliament, out of the reach of those who are seeking to do their duty by their constituents, by whom I mean those who live not only in Northern Ireland but in the United Kingdom as a whole.

The Minister touched briefly upon the closure of the gas industry in Northern Ireland. Perhaps, through the usual channels, there may be an opportunity to discuss that matter. But the announcement was made on a "Long Good Friday"—to borrow the title of a recent film—and we have not yet had the opportunity of a full debate on the whys and the wherefores.

The announcement of the collapse of the Lear Fan project was leaked in a Sunday newspaper over Whitsun, and followed by a response to a written question from the hon. Member for Hazel Grove. To his credit, the Minister sought to inject a new reality into the project with his statement on the Floor of the House on 19 December 1984, when he declared that with new money available from private sources he hoped that the original agreements would be implemented quickly so that the work in Northern Ireland factories could be restarted as soon as possible. The fact remains that £57 million of taxpayers' money was poured into a project that was to yield not an aircraft manufacturing plant in Northern Ireland, but a plant to manufacture component parts. The real essence of the whole investment was that the manufacturing was to be done in Reno, Nevada.

I associate myself with the Minister's statement tonight — which he also made in response to the written question — and the statement of the hon. Member for Antrim, North that there is no reflection on the work force in Northern Ireland. There is nothing wrong with that work force. Like their counterparts on the mainland, they have lost their jobs, in one sense through clumsiness and incompetence, while those on the mainland have lost their jobs through the ideological bludgeoning of the Government. They have been exemplary in their standards of work and in their loyalty to their project. But loyalty, like patriotism, is not enough.

While conceding that it was a high-risk venture, little comfort can be garnered from the Minister's words that, had it succeeded, it would have contributed greatly to employment in and the economy of Northern Ireland. We all wish such projects well, but we must be alert to the dangers. It is that alertness that no doubt prompted my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), to ask the former Minister to

"give a clear assurance that the Government are fully satisfied that they are getting all the information they need, especially of a technical and financial nature, to enable them to judge the future prospects of the company as well as the aircraft?"

The Minister responded:

"Yes. The financial and technical monitoring exercises that have been carried out are satisfactory. We are getting all the information that we need."—[*Official Report*, 23 February 1984; Vol. 54, c. 968.]

I doubt whether that information was available, and whether the Ministers and officials whose salaries we shall be voting tonight knew the difference between anhedral and dihedral wings.

Who checked out whether the Federal Aviation Administration would even give an air worthiness certificate because of the new technology involved? Who analysed the priorities of the Lear Fan company from a commercial standpoint and perceived that they were wrong, first, to get the certification, secondly, to produce the jet, and, thirdly, to market it? The potential market for an eight-seater private jet should have been tested and known and the prospects of getting an air worthiness certificate should have been thoroughly assessed before the taxpayer put even his financial little toe into the water.

The high risk lay in the fact that the aircraft was unlikely to receive, and has not received, an air worthiness certificate. One has to draw the parallel with De Lorean in that the same receiver is being used as in that case. His first duty is to secure the fixed and floating charge on the company's assets in Northern Ireland, and his second is to represent the Government's interests in the assets and technology of the Lear Fan company in the United States.

As we debate this order, we call into question not the Government's good faith, but their competence. They were singularly incompetent in the handling of the Lear Fan proposal, and they have done the taxpayer a disservice in the way that they have approached a technical problem, which should have been examined in much more depth.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind
exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting, with
exactness grinds He all."

In the cases of De Lorean and of Lear Fan, He has ground exceedingly small and revealed the great difficulties and weaknesses in Northern Ireland for those who were looking for high investment and technology with little success.

I have taken on board the Minister's remark that two thirds of the work that had come to Northern Ireland had come from firms outside the Province, but that is no excuse for the incompetence with which this matter has been handled. It should be noted by the House, and no doubt it will be noted by the country.

Appropriation (Northern Ireland)

11.2 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): If there is a Division, we shall be voting for money coming to Northern Ireland. We believe that money is needed for agriculture, housing, jobs, roads and education. We also do not like direct rule. We want a fully devolved Government and Parliament in Northern Ireland, and the full democratic process honoured. That is shown by the fact that in the short time that we have tonight, we have to deal with such a wide range of matters that seriously affect the lives of the peoples of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Does my hon. Friend accept that we want one other thing in Northern Ireland — decent local government? Recently, however, we have seen the introduction into local government in Northern Ireland of the mouthpieces for murder and mayhem in our society. Will my hon. Friend ask the Minister what his response will be to the introduction of Sinn Fein chairmen?

Rev. William McCrea: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. Over the past few hours even the Minister may have realised that there are members of councils in Northern Ireland who will not welcome Sinn Fein, who will not let this pass easily and who will not allow it to be a one-night or a one-afternoon wonder. The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) will find that there are still in Northern Ireland Unionists worthy of that name and of the heritage that they thank God for.

My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) has already mentioned councils. Unionists will not socialise with Sinn Fein, nor will they be used in any way to keep going a system which allows not only the representatives of murderers but murderers themselves to be councillors. If the Government think that we will sit down and look across at Sinn Fein councillors while they measure us up for coffins, they have another think coming. I have no intention of sitting there to be measured up for a coffin by any gunman of the IRA. Ulster needs good local government. Decent local government was destroyed when Sinn Fein councillors were allowed through the doors of the council chambers.

I come from a large agricultural constituency. I hope that for a change the Minister will give us some good news tonight for that industry. Lord Lyell told us that he had sympathy for our farmers. When the bank manager wags his finger to call a farmer into the bank, Lord Lyell's sympathy does not go far. We want more than sympathy. My hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, North mentioned the £7 million that is there to help them out. The Minister should tell us how that money will be given to Northern Ireland farming and agriculture.

The Minister of State has recognised the upward trend of unemployment in Northern Ireland; I think he genuinely appreciates the seriousness of the problem. I come from a constituency that has, the highest unemployment rate in the whole of the United Kingdom. What hope can the Minister give to my constituents in Mid-Ulster? What message can I take back to them concerning future employment? I want viable employment and genuine jobs. I do not want fly-by-nights. I do not want those who come in like De Lorean to use the British taxpayer and the United Kingdom and then disappear. Has the Minister any announcements to make about jobs for my Mid-Ulster constituents? I hope to get an answer to that question concerning the future well-being of my constituents.

Class III, vote 2, deals with expenditure by the Department of Economic Development on subsidies to electricity tariffs. May I draw the attention of the Minister once again to the unbearable burden on Northern Ireland industry, which is disadvantaged because the electricity tariff is pegged to the highest in England. There is a need for a fairer pegging of electricity tariffs to assist industry in the creation of jobs.

Class V deals with roads. I accept that Northern Ireland had some of the best road systems in the United Kingdom, but the roads are now in a deplorable state. What is to be done?

The Castledawson bypass issue may be a hardy annual, but the sooner the Minister moves the sooner the problem will disappear. I should be more than delighted to be able to forget about it and move on to the next town.

What about the Moneymore-Magherafelt road? The Minister promised to see whether works could be completed to make the road safer.

I have written to the Minister about Orlit housing. When will the legislation come into operation? When will the Housing Executive be able to buy back those houses and give the people their money?

The Watson park bungalows are also causing worry because they are still defective after money has been spent on them. I wrote to the Minister asking him to put in writing that his chief officers in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are sure the money already spent is well spent. I fear that the money will be poured down the drain, as it was with De Lorean and Lear Fan. That will not solve the problem and the people will be left in an intolerable position after they have been moved out of their houses three or four times.

When shall I be able to close the file on the case of Mr. Crozier from Cookstown? I shall be happy to give the Minister my file on the case so that he can sift through it. I have written to the Prime Minister, to the Secretary of State, to Lord Hailsham and to the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Mr. Crozier is to be given a pension for health reasons, but no one will provide the health reasons. All he wants is to be told why he is being pensioned off on health grounds; then he will take the pension. I do not want another letter saying, "We have nothing more to add", or, "I am sorry, the case has been looked at before, we have nothing more to say." I want an answer.

Fundamental changes are proposed in health and social service benefits. The Prime Minister has failed to tell the Leader of the Opposition what figures can be applied to the suggested benefits. Perhaps the Minister will disclose them to his hon. Friends from Northern Ireland who can pass them on to the Leader of the Opposition and our constituents.

11.14 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): I intervene, I must admit, as a protest at the length of time available for debate tonight. I do not intend to hold back the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) from replying to the debate. I am frustrated because this is the third time in succession that I have sat through debates. Two debates ago, I got about three minutes, I was not called on the last

occasion, and I assure the House that at one minute before quarter past eleven there is not adequate time for me to deal with the problems of my constituents in Fermanagh and South Tyrone and the difficulties that hon. Members representing Northern Ireland face under direct rule in trying to serve our constituents.

11.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Chris Patten): It is a pleasure once again to wind up an appropriation order debate which, as is customary, travelled far and wide, albeit, as the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) indicated, for a rather shorter period than has sometimes been our good fortune.

I wish to try with the minimum of fuss to answer the main points raised in the debate. Any issues that I am not able to cover in the course of these necessarily abbreviated remarks I or my hon. Friends will follow up in correspondence with the hon. Gentlemen who raised them.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Nicholson) raised two substantive issues about housing. He spoke first—and this point was touched on by other hon. Gentlemen — about renovation grants, and in particular about the delays experienced by his constituents in receiving them. I am conscious that there has been criticism of the Housing Executive administration of the renovation grant scheme, but I know that the executive is keen to improve its performance as much as it can. It is important to note that in the year ended 31 December 1983 almost 27,000 improvement, conversion, intermediate and repairs grants were approved, and grant was paid in just over 24,000 cases. These figures increased to almost 32,000 and 27,000 respectively in 1984, illustrating the scale of the grants operation. While there was a backlog of grants applications which reached 8,400 in March 1984, this has now fallen back to just under 3,000. This situation arose from the substantial increase in demand for grant aid resulting from the 1983 housing order, which widened the scope of the renovation grant scheme in a number of respects. While I am satisfied with the steps taken to reduce delays in the processing of grant applications, I shall continue to keep the executive's performance in this area under review.

Mr. Maginnis: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, because this is one topic on which I wanted to spend some time tonight.

I hope that the Minister recalls the letter that he sent me on 24 February 1984 after I wrote to him about the possibility of ensuring that grants were paid to those people who were most in need, stating that this perennial difficulty of excessive demolition was preventing the most needy people from getting grants for houses. He told me that the 1979 house condition survey was out of date and that there would be a new house condition survey shortly. That was over a year ago. That house condition survey I have not seen, but I have heard that the contents prove that the single unfits, as they are known, are as numerous as they have ever been, and we have not even begun to scrape the surface. Would the hon. Gentleman comment on that?

Mr. Patten: I am glad to have the opportunity to do so. The house condition survey will be published shortly. The hon. Gentleman is correct to say that one of the matters that it has shown clearly is that, while we have made considerable progress in reducing unfitness, we have an increasing problem of disrepair. That has led me to feel even more strongly than I did when I replied to the hon. Gentleman last year that we have to look at the whole of our renovation grant aid to make sure that it is directed towards those people who are in greatest need and to properties that most need assistance. Therefore, I have set up a small committee composed of officials of my Department and of the Housing Executive which is looking at how we can target grant aid more effectively within the existing legislative framework. I hope very much that we shall have proposals to discuss with hon. Members before too long. The point made by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone is extremely important, and I hope that we shall be able to demonstrate that we are responding to it in good faith as soon as may be.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh also referred to Orlit dwellings and asked for greater speed in dealing with the Housing Executive stock of Orlits. The hon. Gentleman may be aware that the Housing Executive is already considering the options for individual estates following its technical investigations. Announcements will be made by the executive on an estate-by-estate basis as soon as possible after consultation with the tenants. I know that the executive is fully seized of the need to take action as quickly as possible.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to consider the sale of Orlit dwellings to tenants at a cost reflecting their condition. I shall look at that proposal, but I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would see very much advantage for the tenant in becoming the owner of a dwelling which in some cases could have a life span of only five to 10 years without expensive remedial action.

The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) asked about legislation to bring the position in Northern Ireland into line with that in Great Britain. We had slightly more difficulty than we anticipated in drafting the legislation. However, I hope that we shall be able to lay an order before the House very soon. In the meantime, as I have made clear time and again, any special hardship cases will be dealt with, as two have already, on an administrative basis. If the hon. Gentleman has other similar cases, I should be more than happy to consider them.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh asked about a number of agricultural matters, beginning with the shortage of cold storage facilities for intervention beef. He knows about my status as a tyro in these matters, but I can say that we are aware of the potential difficulties arising from limitations on freezing and storage capacity for intervention beef, and we have arranged for a study to be undertaken on the facilities available, the current incentives, the employment prospects, the future needs and how they might be met.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster and others mentioned, quite understandably, their concern about milk quotas. They spoke of the special difficulties facing the Northern Ireland dairy industry. I can assure the House that we are doing all we can to achieve the maximum possible relief for the Province's milk farmers. We accept that without additional quota for Northern Ireland, individual producers may find themselves in difficulties. The very low uptake under the outgoers scheme was most

[Mr. Patten]

unfortunate and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson) said, we are continuing to seek a solution to the problem. As the hon. Member for Antrim, North asked, I shall convey the concern expressed by hon. Members to my noble Friend who is responsible for these matters in Northern Ireland and also to the Secretary of State.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North referred in the context of Lear Fan to Ulster workmanship. He was entirely right to say that it is second to none, as the success of Harland and Wolff, Shorts and many other companies has made clear.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the future of Ballintoy harbour, which I enjoyed visiting with him on one memorable occasion when the sun shone, as it always does on the righteous. I shall look into the latest state of of play on Ballintoy and write to the hon. Gentleman about it.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North referred to the arguments for a regional library, and protested about the recent decision that the Belfast central library should not become a regional reference facility independent of the Belfast Education and Library Board. There is not the necessary support from the boards for such a change to the existing arrangements. They are apparently largely content with the provision under existing legislation enabling all boards to take advantage of the services provided by the Belfast central library.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the extent to which Carson's monument is turning green. My hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) understandably raised that point. I have nothing to add to what I have already said to my hon. Friend, but I note the importance that the hon. Gentleman properly attaches to the cleaning of that statue.

The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster referred to the position in local government following the elections. I should like to make it clear again, as I did in a series of radio, television and newspaper interviews yesterday, that there has been and will be no change in the Government's policy towards Sinn Fein. No reasonable construction of my remarks yesterday could conceivably suggest that there would be. Finally, as the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) said in a series of letters to newspapers, I hope that hon. Members will keep the electoral failures and successes of Sinn Fein in perspective. It did worse in the local elections than in the European elections or the general election, and considerably worse in the local government elections than three out of the four main constitutional parties.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) asked me to give him an undertaking about scallop beds. He referred to the fisheries close to the coast of Northern Ireland. I reiterate the assurances given by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North in his opening speech, that the fisheries are closely monitored. If there is any evidence of their stocks being endangered, steps will be taken to have the beds closed. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman finds that assurance satisfactory.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about waste disposal and the relative responsibilities of district councils and my Department. As he knows, district councils have the statutory responsibility for the development of a waste disposal strategy for their areas. The identification and preparation of suitable sites is not a matter in which I can intervene. However, my Department is actively involved with district councils about waste management. We shall assist where possible. The right hon. Gentleman made some valuable suggestions about the extent to which we should take a greater lead in co-ordinating the various tasks of district councils in this respect, and I shall certainly come back to him on that point as positively as possible.

My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison), whom we always welcome to our debates, referred to the welcome increase in recent years in the number of extremely wise and perceptive holidaymakers, who come to Northern Ireland, and to the increased number of hon. Members who visit the Province, which is also to be welcomed. My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will shortly be chairing a conference on tourism to see how we can attract even more tourists to our shores.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), in a thoughtful speech, asked many detailed and serious questions about Lear Fan, which he will not expect me to answer during the next 60 seconds. However, they will be answered in due course in as full and open a way as possible—in other words in the fashion for which my hon. Friend the Minister of State is well known and respected.

I believe that I have answered most of the main points raised in the debate. I repeat that any detailed points will be answered in subsequent correspondence. This appropriation order shows once again that the Government are attempting to grapple with the extremely difficult problems of Northern Ireland in a reasonable and imaginative way, with a fair and reasonable allocation of public expenditure to support our policies and objectives. I trust that that will also be the view of the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 133, Noes 5.

Division No. 229] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Cranborne, Viscount
Amess, David	Dorrell, Stephen
Ancram, Michael	Emery, Sir Peter
Arnold, Tom	Evennett, David
Ashby, David	Fallon, Michael
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*	Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Baldry, Tony	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Beith, A. J.	Fox, Marcus
Bellingham, Henry	Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Blackburn, John	Gregory, Conal
Bottomley, Peter	Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Hampson, Dr Keith
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Hargreaves, Kenneth
Boyson, Dr Rhodes	Harris, David
Bright, Graham	Haselhurst, Alan
Brinton, Tim	Hayes, J.
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Heathcoat-Amory, David
Bruinvels, Peter	Hicks, Robert
Burt, Alistair	Hind, Kenneth
Butcher, John	Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Butterfill, John	Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Carttiss, Michael	Knowles, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul	Knox, David
Chope, Christopher	Lang, Ian
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*	Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Clegg, Sir Walter	Lester, Jim
Conway, Derek	Lightbown, David
Coombs, Simon	Lilley, Peter
Cope, John	Lord, Michael

Lyell, Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Mather, Carol
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

McCusker, Harold
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nicholson, J.
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. William Ross and
Mr. Ken Maginnis

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 8th May, be approved.

Manchester Steel Ltd. (Closure)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Major.]*

11.40 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): I have chosen this subject for the Adjournment debate to give some of the facts about the context within which the Manchester Steel closure decision should be seen. Why is the closure of Manchester Steel Ltd. so exceptional? It is not just another isolated set of redundancies, because we have had such closures and redundancies in the past. The gradual decline in manufacturing goes back over a long period to the mid-1960s. In recent years the position has deteriorated rapidly, to such an extent that east Manchester has been ravaged by closures and redundancies.

How dramatically the situation has changed. East Manchester, once the workshop of the world with its expanding and prosperous light and heavy engineering industry, coal mining, chemical firms and textiles businesses, is barely recognisable now, with its deserted factories bearing witness to the changed fortunes of that part of Manchester.

In 1978, manufacturing employment accounted for some 63 per cent. of jobs in the area. Since then, job losses in manufacturing in east Manchester have become far more dramatic. Between 1979 and 1983, 12 firms employing more than 100 people have closed. They include Laurence Scott with 650 employees; Richard Johnson and Nephew with 610 employees; Easicut tools with 350 employees; Walkden and Makin with 270 and more recently GEC Switchgear has announced that it will be shedding about 270 jobs from its Openshaw factory.

Between 1971 and 1985, 20,000 jobs have been lost in east Manchester and the redundancies between 1981 and 1984 account for about 4,500 jobs. With such job losses the social impact has been catastrophic. Until 1980, unemployment in that part of the city compared with the national average. The effect of the closures and redundancies in east Manchester has resulted in the unemployment rate almost doubling between 1980 and 1981.

The environmental consequences of those changes can be seen in the vacant, under-used land and buildings and the unattractive image that that gives the area. Nearly one quarter of the industrial land in east Manchester is now vacant. Manchester city council, through its east Manchester initiative, has taken steps to try to remedy the situation and to date some £8 million has been spent on acquiring land and buildings to carry out demolition, but more funding will be required by the city council. It has pressed the case for funds to be made available on a more regularly programmed basis, arguing that £10 million is needed over the next three years to reclaim derelict land and buildings.

Every closure adds to the enormity of the problem, and now we have Manchester Steel. It is part of the process of losing manufacturing in east Manchester. It is another nail in the coffin of this once vibrant working area and another attack on workers who have the skill and the will to work, but who are having their pride torn from them by a notice of closure which says that they are expendable and are no longer required. To add insult to injury, the decision to close Manchester Steel was taken in secret, behind closed doors in a foreign country. The company was owned by

[Mr. Robert Litherland]

Elkem of Norway and discussions had been taking place for nine months and the news broke through a leak of information.

In 1982, the unions and the management, assisted by the city council, had combined to save the firm. The workers were left in the dark about what was taking place. Their thanks was no consultation but merely a statement of the cold hard facts that Manchester Steel in my constituency and the Bidston plants on Merseyside were to close. Elkem acted in a dishonourable and underhand way.

What about the Government's attitude? Hiding behind the smokescreen of commercial confidentiality and not being prepared to intervene in a free market commercial transaction, they did nothing. In doing nothing, the Government acquiesced to the takeover by Allied Steel and Wire, which is owned by British Steel and GKN.

We have the ridiculous situation of workers paying their taxes, and money from those taxes being allocated to Allied Steel which uses it to allow foreign firms to sell their steel involvement in the United Kingdom, and the plants are shut. How nice and convenient for the Government and their rationalisation programme.

When a deputation from Manchester Steel met the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, he professed not to know that negotiations for the takeover were under way. Yet the takeover was being considered by the Commission of the European Community. A press release of 20 May said:

"The Commission has authorised Allied Steel and Wire Holdings Ltd . . . to acquire the entire share capital of Manchester Steel Ltd . . . under article 66 of the ECSC Treaty."

In a conversation with Mr. Keith Donoghue, who made the decision on Manchester Steel, the local MEP, Mr. Eddy Newman, was told that those consulted included the Department of Trade and Industry, which not only gave its authorisation, but pointed out to the ECSC that the takeover would suit the development of the steel industry. Who is running this country? Are diktats coming from the European Community?

To the workers, terminology such as "rationalisation" means extinction. They can see the effects on the lives of their families, on the suppliers to Manchester Steel, on services dependent on the purchasing power of the money earned by Manchester Steel workers, on the local shops, pubs and clubs and on home service suppliers. They recognise that the closure creates fears for job security elsewhere.

More families will go on to supplementary and housing benefit, and there will be more mental strain from unemployment. I was told that there were four suicides after the closure of Richard Johnson and Nephew, which had been in existence for 200 years before it was bought by a South African consortium and closed within 18 months. The locks were on the gates when the workers returned to the plant.

There will be family breakdowns and more referrals to health and welfare services. Because of what is happening to the workers and their families and to the area where they live, they will fight the closure to the bitter end. I know these workers and I represent the area. They have my fullest support and they are supported by their union and the community, which is sick and tired of the relentless attack on its living standards. The workers have the support of all Labour Members in the Manchester area. I received a letter today from my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) expressing his support. In addition, my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) will be speaking in the debate.

I have spoken of the local interest, but what about the national interest? In their submission to the Office of Fair Trading the solicitors acting for the Amalgamated Association of Wiredrawers and Kindred Workers state:

"There are a number of reasons why our clients believe that this transaction would be against the national interest. In effect it would concentrate the production of 5·5 to 13·5 mm rod in the hands of one company alone in the United Kingdom. It should be noted also that Manchester Steel is the sole manufacturer, in the country, of 100 to 110 mm concast billet for re-rolling, in the main. These observations touch the surface only of a potentially serious situation and it is our clients' wish, through us, to forumulate a detailed complaint supported by evidence."

The evidence is that Manchester Steel is the only independent manufacturer of 100 mm billet selling its products on the market, as British Steel at Scunthorpe ceased production of 100 mm billet about two months ago. There is an increasing demand for this product but also a shortage. If manufacture was in the hands of Allied Steel alone, the re-rollers would have to purchase from that company or import the product, so Allied Steel would be in a position to control both the supply and the price. We believe that the matter should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, because if Manchester Steel ceased production Allied Steel would become the major source of supply.

Many independent wiredrawers obtain their rod requirements from Manchester Steel. Closure would mean that they would have to purchase their requirements from Allied Steel and would have to pay "the price". The alternative for both wiredrawers and reinforcement engineers would be imports.

The Manchester and Bidston rolling mills are flexible and produce small quantities with relatively short lead times, an essential service to many of the small independent wiredrawers. That facility to the market would be lost if Manchester Steel was closed. Allied Steel is not geared to that degree of flexibility. Furthermore, its own downstream interests are in direct competition with the small independent companies to which I have referred.

The Manchester Steel plants are modern. A great deal of finance was put into refurbishing the plant in my constituency. The company has flexible working practices. Closure would leave less flexible plant to meet the market requirements.

The United Kingdom generates about 8 million tonnes of scrap per year, of which 4 million tonnes are exported, mainly to Spain. The scrap, converted to steel, is then exported to other countries, including the United Kingdom. If Manchester Steel closes, it is likely that much of the 500,000 tonnes of scrap used by that company would be exported and that some would return to this country as the finished product.

I believe that the observations made by the unions should receive consideration by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. We insist upon that. The Government's replies to my questions are just not good enough. When I talk about the future of Manchester Steel I receive the bland reply that it is up to the new lords and

masters of the company to make the decisions. What part do the Government play? The diktats seem to come from Europe or from high finance somewhere while the Government just stand back and wash their hands of the problem as though they had no moral obligations in the matter.

The Government have a moral obligation to be helpful should any interest be shown by an organisation wishing to acquire Manchester Steel. It is understood that members of senior management of the company were instructed not to look for a bid in the open market. It would be in the interest of the nation in general and of east Manchester in particular if Manchester Steel survived. We want the Government to act before the situation becomes irretrievable.

When we talk about closures and so on, we are talking not simply about statistics and percentages: we are talking about people, human beings, whose only crime is a desire to work. The workers believe that Elkem has sold them out and that the Government have betrayed them. They are left wondering to whom to turn and what hope there is for them and their families. Most of them are youngsters with mortgages and other commitments. They see ahead a path of hopelessness. We want the Government now to say exactly where they stand on this issue and whether they have become allied to the takeover and closure of Manchester Steel.

11.56 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) for initiating this debate and for permitting me to intervene. I do so because, as he explained, Manchester Steel also owned a plant in Birkenhead.

I wish to underline many of the points that my hon. Friend made, particularly the fact that Manchester and Birkenhead already suffer from massively high unemployment. In Bidston, in my constituency, the unemployment rate is in excess of 40 per cent. The mill in Birkenhead, like the one in Manchester, has turned the corner financially.

We are talking also about a takeover in both areas by a company, the main aim of which is to destroy rather than to promote jobs. We are speaking of a takeover bid of a company which, with full union support, has seen a major programme of modernisation and reform.

While I do not wish to deflect thought from the main thrust of my hon. Friend's main comments—particularly when he asked what the Government proposed to do in the present situation—I must comment on the role that Elkem has played in these proceedings. My hon. Friend noted that the negotiations to sell the company and to destroy so many jobs had been going on in secret for nine months.

This Norwegian company not only prides itself on having good industrial relations but it usually talks of worker involvement. However, when we consider Elkem's involvement in this matter, we see that it is not just a question of what is left to be desired but that practically everything is left to be desired about its behaviour. Elkem has behaved badly. It now has a moral responsibility to use its influence to ensure that as many jobs as possible, in Manchester and Birkenhead, are saved.

This is in some respects an unusual Adjournment debate. A number of Back-Bench Members are present, as are two Ministers. I am sure that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy, who has taken a close interest in the future of the steel mill at Bidston, will be interested in what his hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has to say in replying to the debate.

12 midnight

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): First, I thank the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) raising this question. He has every right to do so, bearing in mind the dramatic impact that this closure is having upon his constituency and the unhappy history of unemployment in this sector of Manchester, to which he so vividly referred.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) drew attention to the fact that this is an unusual Adjournment debate because an unusually large number of hon. Members are present. I acknowledge also the interest of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) as the secretary of the north-west group of Conservative Members of Parliament. He has pursued his inquiries in correspondence with my hon. Friend the Minister of State. I hope to be able to answer all of the questions that have been asked.

As a matter of general principle, the Government recognise that the manufacturing sector in the United Kingdom produces a far higher proportion of internationally tradable goods than does the service sector. For that reason, I join the hon. Member for Manchester, Central in stating that we believe that this country's manufacturing sector is our prime generator of wealth and that this will always be the case. Therefore, we share he hon. Gentleman's concern that skills in the manufacturing sector should be used to the fullest possible extent. However, we are faced with some excruciating dilemmas in the steel industry, not only on a United Kingdom but on a European basis. I should therefore like to deal with that area of influence, because it is possible that the hon. Gentleman has confused one or two matters in that area.

I was able recently to gauge the depth of feeling of the hon. Gentleman and his constituents when I met a delegation of representatives of the work force from Manchester Steel. It was led by the hon. Members for Manchester, Central and for Birkenhead, whose constituency includes Manchester Steel's other plant at Bidston.

I propose to respond to the points that have been made under two broad headings: first, to make clear the Government's position on the proposed closure of Manchester Steel and to set it in the wider context of the problems faced by the steel industry, outlined by the hon. Member for Manchester, Central, and, secondly, to draw attention to the steps which the Government are taking to encourage job opportunities in Manchester.

I fully recognise the disappointment and frustration which must have been caused by the closure announcement, because the company had survived an earlier threat of closure in 1982. Manchester Steel remained in business at that time largely because the work force agreed to a cost reduction programme. That made their pain, in the light of the recent announcement, that much more difficult to bear.

[Mr. John Butcher]

Considerable improvements were made, but regrettably they have not been sufficient to persuade Elkem to retain the production facilities at Manchester and Bidston in the face of stagnant markets.

Many of the problems of the industry which existed in 1982 still remain. Depressed demand for steel products continues and substantial overcapacity exists, with consequential effects on efficiency and profitability. Other parts of the steel industry face the same difficulties, both here and throughout Europe.

Painful measures have had to be taken throughout the EC to stabilise the market, to restructure the industry, and to remove excess capacity. Behind those terms lie the social and human difficulties about which we have heard. This process has been difficult and has resulted in large-scale redundancies both here and on the continent. That point has been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) who is here this evening. But only by this means can an efficient and profitable industry be re-established, with reasonable hopes of longer-term job security for those remaining in the industry, although that is of no consolation to those who are the casualties of this process. In this context, it is estimated that in Manchester Steel's product area, capacity utilisation is between only 65 and 70 per cent. Much higher levels are needed for sustained profitability and viability.

The Government's position on further restructuring in the steel industry is quite clear. Where private sector firms, such as Allied Steel and Wire and Manchester Steel, are concerned, it is for the firms themselves to decide what rationalisation is necessary and what form it should take. The firms in the industry are best placed to know what measures are needed, and to take decisions based on their commercial judgment. It would be wrong for the Government to second-guess or seek to influence their plans.

The Government were therefore not involved in the commercial negotiations which led up to ASW buying Manchester Steel from Elkem. We were, however, kept in touch with developments on the usual commercially confidential basis by ASW.

There have been some suggestions that ASW is not a genuine private sector company because of the British Steel Corporation's major — now 48 per cent. — shareholding. Let me make it clear tht since ASW was set up as a joint venture between BSC and GKN in 1981, the Government have always regarded it very clearly as a private sector firm. It therefore makes its own commercial decisions without any need for Government approval, just like any other private sector business.

It has been suggested that even if the rolling operations were to close down steelmaking, the steelmaking aspect of Manchester Steel should be kept open because closure could cause problems in the supply of billets to British customers. I understand that ASW has deferred a decision about the future of the Openshaw billet furnace. No doubt it will take into account the market prospects before finalising its decision. But I would emphasise yet again that it is for the company to judge whether the retention of the facilities is viable.

Equally, if other steelmakers or steel buyers of those products wished to make proposals to ASW about supplies of billet, or the possible purchase of either of the steelmaking plants, they are free to do so. This is not a matter for the Government, as the earlier negotiations were not, and it is for ASW to consider any proposals on their commercial merits. I understand that that is its precise attitude.

I turn now to the wider effects of the planned closure of Manchester Steel on the Manchester area, and north-east Manchester in particular. The Government recognise that this area has suffered considerably from the effects of industrial decline in recent years. Government policies as a whole, both in the steel industry and more widely, are designed to re-establish efficient and internationally competitive businesses. But success will not necessarily result in increased job opportunities in the same sectors as those where job losses have occurred in the past.

Against that background, the Government have ensured that considerable resources are directed to the Manchester area to alleviate the worst effects of industrial decline. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Government made part of Manchester, including the north-east of the city, an assisted area last November. That means that the area now benefits from a number of schemes of support for industry which would not otherwise be available. These include regional selective assistance. Since assisted status was granted, the north-west regional office has received 18 firm inquiries about regional selective assistance from firms in north-east Manchester, of which one is currently at an advanced stage of appraisal. I very much hope that the number of good projects submitted for appraisal will increase.

North-east Manchester is also eligible for derelict land clearance grant, designed to assist the economic recovery of rundown areas by providing resources for clearing derelict sites. The sum of £600,000 was provided in 1984-85 for north-east Manchester to clear sites for industrial or residential development, or to improve housing conditions and community facilities. If the Openshaw plant were to close, it is possible that assistance under that scheme could be provided towards the clearance of the site.

North-east Manchester receives considerable help from the Department of the Environment's inner city policy. Three industrial improvement areas have been designated and the inner urban area of Manchester benefits from partnership area status — the highest designation under the urban programme. Since 1982, that has made available some £4 million of aid for 198 industrial and environmental improvement projects in Manchester.

Manchester is also the focus of one of five city action teams we launched in April. The teams' task will be to look at ways of helping east Manchester, through the combined schemes offered by my Department, the Department of the Environment and the Manpower Services Commission.

Through all these measures, the Government are doing a great deal to help the industrial base of north-east Manchester, and the job prospects of those who live there.

Tonight's debate has raised a number of very broad as well as understandably specific issues. I say to hon. Members on both sides of the House that the Government do not underestimate the social cost of these closures. Neither are we unsympathetic.

We are unanimous in condemning the unwelcome pressures that come from an increase in unemployment in any local community. But I am bound to say that, faced with that, we must look also at those other broader

industrial implications. We believe that there is a suite of policies available that will help us to address each side of this particularly difficult equation.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 6 June 1985

The House met at half-past Two O'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

C-POULTRY COMPANY LIMITED BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND BILL *(By Order)*
Lords amendments agreed to.

BATH CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Read the Third time, and passed, with an amendment.

PLYMOUTH MARINE EVENTS BASE BILL *(By Order)*
Read the Third time, and passed.

YORKSHIRE WATER AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 13 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Temporary Admissions

1. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers granted temporary admission to the United Kingdom absconded in 1984; and what percentage this is of those so admitted.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): In 1984 a total of 8,527 passengers were given temporary admission either pending further examination or after refusal of leave to enter. Of these, 187 or just over 2 per cent absconded.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that Tamils fleeing persecution would make as good citizens of this country as the children of the Lithuanians who fled from their country a generation ago?

Mr. Waddington: The matter raised by the hon. Lady is of great importance, but it goes very wide of this question. A short time ago we announced what we think is a fair policy towards Tamils. First, we shall acknowledge and honour our obligations under the United Nations convention on refugees. Secondly, we have said that we shall not send back any Tamil who would suffer severe hardship if returned.

Ms. Clare Short: In view of those figures, does the Minister agree that his officials are refusing to let many genuine visitors into this country and putting them in the humiliating position of being detained at airports and having to seek out a Member of Parliament in order to get permission to see their relatives? Does the hon. and learned Gentleman also agree that we should——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about absconding. Is not this matter a little wide of the question?

Ms. Short: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady may proceed.

Ms. Short: It is absolutely in order.

Mr. Speaker: With respect, I decide that.

Mr. Waddington: I am always willing to oblige, Mr. Speaker. Some might say that the low level of absconding confirms the judgment of immigration officers in granting temporary admission. It is somewhat illogical to argue that, because people have not absconded, they must have qualified for entry as visitors and therefore were wrongly refused entry.

Mr. Dubs: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that last Tuesday evening, for the first time, a Tamil who had sought asylum in this country was returned direct to Sri Lanka and that that occurred because of an administrative muddle by Home Office officials? Will the hon. and learned Gentleman now say categorically——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The same rules apply to the Front Bench as to the Back Bench. That question would more correctly be asked on question No. 8.

Mr. Dubs: The issue concerns a person who, I believe, was held in custody to prevent him absconding.

Mr. Speaker: The point is that he did not abscond.

Police Forces (Strength)

2. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the present manning levels of police forces.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Leon Brittan): There were 120,364 police officers and 39,299 civilian staff in England and Wales on 30 April. This was a total increase of 12,919 since May 1979; it was also an increase of 461 since March of this year.

Mr. Hunter: I applaud the professionalism and dedication of the police and welcome the measures that the Government have taken to increase manpower, but the fact remains that the burden of responsibility and duty that the police must now shoulder has increased significantly since 1979. In some parts of the country there appears to be little more than a minimum level of effective policing. Will the Government give urgent consideration to a further increase in police manpower?

Mr. Brittan: I agree that the burdens on the police since 1979 have increased, and it is for exactly that reason that the numbers of police have been increased.

With regard to the position in particular parts of the country, obviously I consider applications for increases in police establishment on their merits.

Mr. Dobson: If there are sufficient police, why have the numbers of crimes increased from 2·5 million in 1979 to 3·5 million in 1984?

Mr. Brittan: I think that the hon. Gentleman knows enough about the causes of crime to realise that they relate

as much to what criminals do as to the presence of policemen. Were it not for the strengthening of the forces of law and order, I have no doubt whatever that, with the increase in crime that is occurring all over the Western world, crime would be far worse in this country.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, in cases recently brought to my attention, there has been a delay of over 15 minutes in response to an emergency call before even one police officer has arrived on the scene? Obviously, further action, such as an arrest, is precluded until reinforcements arrive. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that that is a reflection of inadequate manning levels and that the public should be assured that they will have a prompt and efficient response to any emergency call?

Mr. Brittan: I agree that it is important that emergency calls should be dealt with on an emergency basis. My hon. Friend obviously has a particular case in mind. If she would like to get in touch with me, I shall look into it and see what went wrong.

Mr. Soley: Given that the Home Secretary thinks that he has done so much for the police in manning and other areas, why does he think that he received such a hostile reception at the police conference?

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman might like to compare that response with the one that his right hon. Friend received.

Mr. Hayes: I appreciate that my right hon. and learned Friend is committed to doing everything he can to ensure that we have an efficient and effective police force, but is he aware that there is widespread concern among officers in the metropolis that the present restrictions on overtime may be hampering inquiries? Will he investigate those allegations?

Mr. Brittan: It is important that the police should operate efficiently. I think that the measures that the commissioner has introduced to regulate overtime are an important part of the process of ensuring that the police do operate efficiently.

Coal Industry Dispute

3. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many miners arrested during the miners' strike are still in prison; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): The occupation of prisoners is not recorded centrally.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that during the miners' strike most Ministers talked of the strike as being a political strike? If that is the case, those miners who are still in prison are political prisoners. If it is in order for Ministers to trot over to east European countries and claim that there are political prisoners there who should be brought out, surely it is right for Labour Members to call for an amnesty for those miners who are in prison. Would the Minister not be better disposed rounding up the crooks at Johnson Matthey who have been giving out backhanders in order to get £75 million in rescue deals?

Mr. Mellor: The logical powers of the hon. Gentleman make those of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear appear positively prosaic by comparison.

Shoplifting

4. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people tried on indictment for shoplifting in 1983, 1984, and 1985, respectively, were acquitted.

Mr. Mellor: In England and Wales in 1983, 1,133 persons were acquitted in the Crown court of theft from shops, and 3,362 were found guilty. Corresponding information for 1984 and 1985 is not yet available.

Mr. Janner: As I am sure the Minister will agree, the situation in this area of law and practice is totally unsatisfactory. Will he confirm that when the new independent prosecution service comes into operation the prosecution of accused shoplifters will no longer be left to shopkeepers, and that meanwhile he will give instructions to the police to follow the same sort of procedures when deciding whom to prosecute—where they do—as are now followed successfully and well in areas such as Essex and Leicester?

Mr. Mellor: I appreciate the hon. and learned Gentleman's interest, which I share, in this matter. I am happy to confirm that one of the many beneficial consequences of the new independent prosecution system will be that in the one area of the country where prosecutions for these offences are habitually undertaken by the stores—that is, in Greater London—prosecutions will be taken over for the most part by the independent prosecution service. The hon. and learned Gentleman will welcome the fact that in the circular sent out by the Home Office in February about cautioning, particular attention was drawn to the importance of cautioning in relation to vulnerable elderly offenders. He will also be interested to know that of the number of offenders over 60 cautioned and found guilty, the proportion cautioned increased from 48 per cent. in 1980 to 61 per cent. in 1983. The circular will probably lead to an increase in those figures.

Mr. Adley: Is my hon. Friend aware that as long ago as 1972 I had my first Adjournment debate on this subject, when my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) accepted that there was a direct link between the increasing number of self-service stores and the increase in shoplifting? Does the Home Office accept that where trading methods cause crime, that cause and effect should not be ignored by society?

Mr. Mellor: The issue of prevention is crucial and we continue to have well in mind the point that my hon. Friend makes.

Primary Purpose Rule

5. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the instructions to entry certificate officers regarding the primary purpose rule.

6. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will now introduce legislation to abolish the primary purpose rule for fiancés and husbands wishing to join partners in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: I will, with permission, answer this question and question No. 6 together.

Mr. Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can these two questions be answered by the Home Secretary rather than by an Under-Secretary?

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member knows that that is not a point of order for me. Who answers questions is a matter for the Department concerned.

Mr. Waddington: Instructions to immigration staff are being reviewed, in the course of which the extent to which they can be published will be considered. The issue of guidance to entry clearance officers is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. The Government do not intend to abolish the primary purpose test.

Mr. Pike: Is the hon. and learned Gentleman aware that this rule causes more difficulties than most other aspects of immigration policy? In view of the recent decision of the European Court of Human Rights, may we have an assurance that, when changes are made, men coming into the country will be treated on the same basis as women coming here? Is the Minister further aware that that does not mean any change being made adversely? We want change in the right direction, so that the position as it now applies to women is extended to men.

Mr. Waddington: It would be absurd if, having tightened up the work permit system to prevent young men coming here and going on to the labour market, we were to allow those same young men to come here by using marriage as a device. The judgment to which the hon. Gentleman refers does not directly concern the primary purpose rule, but obviously we are now considering the whole position in the light of the judgment and will announce our conclusions in due course.

Mr. Hughes: Perhaps one day the Home Secretary will take some responsibility for these matters. In the meantime, will the Government respond — as the Government, whom they assert they are, of law and order —by obeying the 12th finding against this country by the European Court of Human Rights? As the Government, as they assert they are, of the family, will they allow husbands and fiancés to come to this country with their families? As the Government, as they assert they are, of equal opportunity, will they ensure that we have a new set of immigration laws before the House rises for the summer? May we also be assured that nobody who is at present in breach of the rules which have been found to be contrary to human rights is penalised, and that that will apply from the date of the Strasbourg ruling?

Mr. Waddington: It seems to have escaped the hon. Gentleman's notice that we first accepted the right of individual petition to the court back in 1966. Only in 1981 did France accept that right. In those circumstances, and as many other countries still do not accept the right of individual petition to the court, it is not surprising that more judgments have been made against the British Government than against other Governments.

The country would be immensely surprised if, having willed a firm and fair immigration control, we now took the view that anybody who enters into a marriage, irrespective of whether that marriage is entered into for immigration purposes, should be able to come here.

Mr. Stanbrook: On the question of the judgment by the European Court of Human Rights, are the Government content that a group of unelected foreigners should legislate for this country on matters of political and social importance?

Mr. Waddington: We adhere to the convention and we shall abide by it. We shall make rule changes, but my hon. Friend will have to be patient, because we shall have to study the judgment carefully.

Mr. Watts: Does my hon. Friend agree that the primary purpose rule is an essential safeguard for many brides, such as those in my constituency, about whom I have written to my hon. Friend, who were abandoned by their husbands when the two-year period necessary for their husbands to have an unlimited right to remain here expired?

Mr. Waddington: The justification for the primary purpose rule is that it is a necessary part of our immigration control, but we should be stupid not to recognise that social problems are involved. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to hint at them today. We all know of cases where the primary purpose rule has been a safeguard for young women here.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Minister aware that he made an astonishing blunder in answering an earlier question this afternoon? Is he further aware——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot ask that. We have passed that question.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Minister aware that he made an astonishing blunder in answering a question just a moment ago? Is he further aware that he said that he was considering what to do about the European Court decision, yet earlier he said that the Government did not intend to abolish the primary purpose test? As the primary purpose test was the subject of the condemnation of our immigration practices by the European Court, because it is a key element in sex discrimination, how can the Minister say that he is open-minded and considering the result? He has already said that he has made up his mind.

Mr. Waddington: The judgment does not directly concern the primary purpose rule. I repeat that we shall study the judgment with care and do that which is necessary.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I apologise to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), but I got the meaning of his question wrong.

Sports Facilities (Safety)

7. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the implications for safety and security at other sports facilities in the light of the disaster at Bradford City association football club.

Mr. Brittan: While those will in the longer term be matters upon which the Government will look to Mr. Justice Popplewell's inquiry for advice, I have taken the following immediate steps as a result of my statement on 13 May. First, chief fire officers were asked on 16 May as a matter of urgency to visit all uncertificated sports stadia within the definition of the 1975 Act and to advise management on any necessary safety measures.

Secondly, on 23 May, consultation letters were sent to the football authorities and other interested parties on the timetable for designation of the third and fourth division Football League grounds, which I had promised would be put in hand immediately.

Thirdly, on the same day, I announced to the Rugby League my intention also to extend designation, although not necessarily on the same time scale, to the grounds of clubs in divisions 1 and 2 of the Rugby League.

Mr. Alton: I am grateful to the Home Secretary for that reply. How long will he give the clubs before they are expected to implement the Prime Minister's recommendations on personal security cards, the security of grounds and segregation? Will he be entering into talks, even if informal, with the organisers of sports in other grounds? What response——

Mr. Heffer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is not in order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) must keep in order.

Mr. Alton: I am in order, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary question is in order.

What response will the Home Secretary give to those clubs which have asked for funds to carry out much needed improvements to their grounds?

Mr. Brittan: I think that the question of cards and other such matters go beyond the question, but those matters are being actively discussed with the football authorities. On the question of funds, the hon. Gentleman will recall what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on Tuesday.

Mr. Waller: While it appears certain that association football clubs can do something to make their grounds safer through funds available from the Football Grounds Improvement Trust, will my right hon. and learned Friend consult his right hon. and hon. Friends about the particular problems of Rugby League clubs, many of which have old wooden stands, but, unfortunately, no similar recourse to funds?

Mr. Brittan: My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport will be considering with the Rugby League the implications of the proposed extension of designation to the grounds of clubs in divisions 1 and 2 of the Rugby League. My hon. Friend will recall my reference to the difference in the time scales for football and rugby.

I stress that clubs have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the public, in the same way as the operators of any place of entertainment have that responsibility.

Mr. Heffer: Will the Home Secretary explain to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) that there is a great difference between someone unfortunately dropping a matchstick and setting a stand on fire in Bradford, and football hooliganism? Will he also explain to him that it is about time he stopped using the House of Commons for his abusive activities, as he does in relation to all subjects, rather than dealing with the issue?

Mr. Brittan: I do not think that I should use the opportunity of such a serious question to intervene in an intra-Liverpool dispute. Although broadly I agree with what the hon. Gentleman said, there is a relationship between security and safety. It is for exactly that reason that I asked Mr. Justice Popplewell to look at both aspects of the matter. It does not take long for the House to consider the locking of exits, for example, to realise the connection.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths: While very much welcoming what my right hon. and learned Friend has said—that it is the responsibility of football clubs to ensure the safety and security of those who go to their grounds—may I ask him to pay particular regard to the implications for police manpower of any of the changes that may be proposed? Will he also offer to the House his view on the point that football clubs might spend a little less money on the transfer of players and a little more on safety at their grounds?

Mr. Brittan: I shall draw my hon. Friend's second point to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport. I agree with my hon. Friend's first point. I hope that any changes that are introduced following the examination of these tragic matters will take full account of police manpower and will ease rather than add to the burdens on the police.

Mr. Torney: Will the Home Secretary further consider the suggestion that I made in my speech immediately after the Bradford city football ground fire, that sprinkler systems should be installed in all football grounds and in all other places of a similar nature and that orders should be given that doors must not be locked while large numbers of people are inside? Does he agree that if sprinklers had been in place inside Bradford city football ground the death toll and the number of injuries would have been much lower?

Mr. Brittan: I ought not to speculate upon the hon. Gentleman's last point. However, I agree that both of the points to which he has referred will need to be considered in the light of the findings of Mr. Justice Popplewell in his interim report.

Mr. Tony Banks: While the designation of third and fourth division football grounds is to be welcomed, can the Home Secretary tell the House whether his colleagues are discussing the possibility of making loans available to league clubs to carry out the necessary safety improvements? If not, designation will result in the closing of a number of third and fourth division grounds.

Mr. Brittan: I have already explained that the financing of such safety measures as have been taken or are to be taken to improve spectator safety is being considered by the working group under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport. The surveyors of the Football Grounds Improvement Trust are assessing the likely cost. Until that process has been completed it would not be sensible to make any judgments.

Immigration Act 1971

8. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to repeal the Immigration Act 1971.

Mr. Brittan: No, Sir.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for his succinct answer. Does he agree that to repeal the Immigration Act 1971 would be disastrous both in terms of employment and community relations, not least for the members of the immigrant community? Is it not completely irresponsible of the Labour party to make such a proposal?

Mr. Brittan: I agree with every single word of my hon. Friend. The continuation of firm but fair immigration control is crucial for race relations, as for many other aspects of our national life.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Home Secretary aware that serious abuses of the Immigration Act 1971 are taking place and that the procedures he has announced during the last two weeks concerning the treatment of Tamil refugees seeking asylum in this country have met with enormous opposition from Members of Parliament and from all of the immigration advisory agencies and refugee agencies? Is he further aware that the 24-hour rule for Members of Parliament, concerning the time in which they can make representations, is completely inadequate, and that until Tuesday of this week the immigration officers at Gatwick airport were unaware that they had to inform the United Kingdom immigrants advisory service of any refugee-seekers arriving in this country? Furthermore, is the Home Secretary aware that on Tuesday of this week a Tamil asylum seeker was removed extra-judicially from this country to Colombo, that his whereabouts are unknown and that it is incumbent upon the Home Secretary to tell the House what has happened to that man, why he was removed and what steps are being taken to ensure that he is returned safely to this country? An inquiry ought to be mounted into the whole affair.

Mr. Brittan: The only point that has not been widely canvassed in the statement that I made last Monday to the House is the hon. Gentleman's last point. The particular case to which he referred was considered in great detail. We concluded that it did not meet the requirements of the United Nations' convention and that the test of severe hardship had not been met.

Mr. Corbyn: Where is he?

Mr. Brittan: In accordance with the administrative practice whereby the United Kingdom immigrants advisory service has been informed of cases where asylum is refused——

Mr. Corbyn: Is he still alive?

Mr. Brittan: —it was given the opportunity to interview the person in question and it did so, but before the results of that interview and any representations were received he was removed to Colombo. This action was the result of a serious failure in communication. I have ordered an urgent and thorough investigation both into the organisational failure and into the actions of the individual members of staff involved.

The high commission in Colombo has been asked to contact the person in question, whose brother lives in Colombo. However, it is important to stress that I have no reason to doubt at present that the decision arrived at in his case was correct and in accordance with the policy that I announced. Nevertheless, the representations from UKIAS will be fully considered. If the judgment made in the light of that consideration is that the person in question meets the severe hardship test, contrary to the judgment that was previously formed, he will be granted a visa and returned to this country at public expense.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is a basic right of every country to define who its citizens are and then to enforce the appropriate immigration rules? Is he aware that many of the countries which criticise Britain have much more restrictive citizenship and immigration rules?

Mr. Brittan: My hon. Friend is absolutely right on both points.

Mr. Kaufman: With regard to the extraordinary admission that the Home Secretary has just made in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), can the right hon. and learned Gentleman now tell the House what action is being taken to ensure that such a thing does not happen again? *[Interruption.]* It happened once, although the Government said that there was no danger of it happening, because the Home Secretary does not care about these matters. He does not care that people may be sent back to imprisonment, torture and death, after which it is too late to put things right. That is why we want an assurance that the Government will ensure that nothing like this will happen again, and that a further statement will be made to the House about it. That is what we seek.

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) raised a serious point about a particular case. He has been in no way assisted by the right hon. Gentleman's note of hysteria. I attempted to deal with that question in a serious way. The position is exactly as I said it was last Monday, and I assure the right hon. Gentleman and the House that the administrative practice followed since 1983, whereby UKIAS is informed of cases where asylum is refused, and is given the opportunity to make representations before anyone is returned, will be followed. I have taken the strongest steps to ensure that it will be followed in all cases. I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman might at least have the grace to accept that I gave a very frank and full statement to the House about what happened.

Metropolitan Police

10. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider the setting up of a study commission for the purpose of assessing the possibility of transferring control of the Metropolitan police to an elected body.

Mr. Brittan: No, Sir.

Mr. Atkinson: Why does the Home Secretary so tenaciously resist the demands of Londoners to democratise the accountability of the Metropolitan police? He has authorised the expenditure of about £760 million. He is now setting up consultative committees which, he says, have no right to intervene in the non-operative affairs of the London police or to interfere in policy matters, so they can say nothing about that expenditure—justified or not—of £760 million.

Mr. Brittan: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's suggestion, because nothing could be more dangerous to the liberties of this country than to hand over the police of London to political control.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Will my right hon. and learned Friend continue to uphold the constitutional independence of chief officers of police, not only in London but throughout the country?

Mr. Brittan: Certainly. The principle applies throughout the country.

Mr. Simon Hughes: If the Home Secretary is not willing to consider handing the police in London over to an elected authority, will he consider handing them over to at least a partly elected authority, in line with the discussions going on about other powers in the context of the GLC abolition Bill being considered in the other place between Ministers and Conservative peers?

Mr. Brittan: I am not quite sure what the hon. Gentleman is alluding to, but I do not propose any changes in the arrangements for the policing of London.

America (Ministerial Visit)

11. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the visit by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the United States of America to study techniques for the prevention of drug abuse.

Mr. Mellor: I visited the United States from 7 to 14 April. I had very useful discussions with, among others, representatives of several Federal Departments and agencies. These ranged over many issues, including the forefeiture of drug traffickers' assets, American experience of the cocaine problem and international aspects.

Mr. Sackville: Did my hon. Friend's visit convince him that the drugs problem, particularly with cocaine, can become considerably worse here, and shows signs of doing so, and that the various radical actions that he proposes should be taken now and not delayed until it is too late?

Mr. Mellor: Since returning from the United States, I have tried to play a full part in alerting the public to the problem of the glut of cocaine available in South America and likely to be diverted from the American to the British market. Already, a considerable response has been evident, notably in the formation of two customs teams specifically to deal with cocaine. Cocaine seizures this year are much higher than they were last year. That is a measure of success, but we intend to be diligent on this vital topic.

Mr. Pavitt: Did the Minister examine what is happening in Florida with the treatment of misusers of drugs—cocaine in particular—who need rehabilitation? Will he discuss with the Secretary of State for Social Services the present cut in the provision of clinics for the treatment of those who, unfortunately, become addicts?

Mr. Mellor: Far from there being a cut, there has been an increase in such facilities, brought about by the allocation of £11·5 million from the DHSS and the encouragement that my right hon. Friend has been giving to regional and district health authorities to develop these facilities. He is requiring them to send details of their proposals to the Department, and their responses will be published shortly so that the public can judge the adequacy of the response of each individual health district to this important problem.

Miss Fookes: I urge on my hon. Friend the importance of hitting drug traffickers where it hurts—in the pocket. To that end, can we have the hope of early legislation for forfeiture of assets and for dealing with money laundering?

Mr. Mellor: These are matters of first importance, not just to my hon. Friend, but to the Government. I assure her that we are actively considering, and reaching final conclusions on, legislation to do what she requires.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: How does the Minister explain the more than 400 per cent. increase in drug addiction since the Government came into office?

Mr. Mellor: By the fact that more people are taking drugs. The problem is well known throughout the Western world. As usual, the hon. Gentleman is trying to reduce the quality of what is otherwise a non-partisan debate to make spurious political points. The increase in drug-taking straddled two Governments and will not be resolved by the petty points that the hon. Gentleman delights in making.

Detention Centres

13. **Mr. Bermingham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will establish an independent inquiry into the operation of detention centres.

Mr. Waddington: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Bermingham: Do not the growing number of complaints from parents, probation officers, teachers, solicitors and other people who have any connection with the inmates of detention centres, and the growing numbers of allegations of bullying and brutal treatment within those centres, mean that it is time the Government took such complaints seriously and established an inquiry to ascertain whether the short, sharp shock treatment is nothing more than a prescription for public bullying?

Mr. Waddington: All allegations of ill-treatment are fully and properly investigated. If the allegation is of a criminal offence, it is referred to the police for investigation, and there is no need for a more wide-ranging inquiry. I gather that the hon. Gentleman made an allegation to a newspaper about Usk, but no complaints have been received there from any inmates. Therefore, it is up to the hon. Gentleman, if he has evidence——

Mr. Bermingham: I have.

Mr. Waddington: —of improper conduct to bring it forward.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Forth** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I will be attending a dinner given by Premier Zhao Ziyang of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Forth: When my right hon. Friend goes to Milan on 28-29 June for the European Council meeting, she will find that the agenda includes the Dooge report, which recommends a conference of representatives of member states to negotiate a European union treaty. Since the Dooge report says that such a conference in itself would be the initial stage of such a treaty, will my right hon.

Friend decline to send a representative, on the ground that there is no support in this House or in the country for further European union?

The Prime Minister: I have often spoken about European union. The phrase is understood in this country in a totally different context from that in Europe. I wish that people would not use it. In this country it raises fear of federation. It is not used in that way in Europe. I would be absolutely against a federal Europe. I agree with my hon. Friend about a special intergovernmental conference. I think that it would be superfluous. I know that some of my colleagues in Europe would like to have it, but if we consider the European Council itself, it is an intergovernmental conference and we do not need an extra one.

Mr. Kinnock: On Tuesday the Prime Minister told us that she wanted to be factual about the implications of the social security review. Will she now act upon that and tell us how many million householders will lose as a consequence of the changes proposed in housing benefit and, of those, how many are likely to be people with small occupational pensions who are to be penalised for a lifetime of thrift?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is aware of the reply that I gave. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services pointed out that the cost of housing benefit had gone up from £1·2 billion in 1979-80 to £4·2 billion this year, he indicated that we were hoping to save some £500 million from housing benefit. We cannot be more specific until the many rates are set much later.

Mr. Kinnock: Why will the Prime Minister not answer the question? We know that she has the information. We know that the DHSS and the Cabinet have the information. The housing benefit review team said in its own paper that it was satisfied that despite all the complexities it had

"a reliable indication of the major effects"

of the changes being proposed. That is what we have asked for—a reliable indication. That is what the millions of people who will be affected want. Why will the Prime Minister not come clean?

The Prime Minister: I have indicated to the right hon. Gentleman that savings of £500 million are hoped for. That is only one sixth of the increase that has occurred in housing benefit between 1979 and 1984. That seems to me eminently reasonable. The precise effect on the many people will be known when the specific rates are set, and particularly when the decisions with regard to rates are made.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister know whether the number affected will be 6 million, 6·5 million, 7 million or more? Can the Prime Minister give us a figure even to the nearest half million?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. I have indicated—perhaps I should reiterate it to the right hon. Gentleman — that taxpayers' expenditure — *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman always forgets that all the money he would give away comes from the pockets of his constituents. Taxpayers' expenditure on housing benefit has risen from £1·2 billion in 1979 to £4·2 billion—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister is answering a very serious question.

Hon. Members: No, she is not.

Mr. Speaker: I take it that it is a serious question.

The Prime Minister: Taxpayers' expenditure on housing benefit has risen from £1·2 billion in 1979 to £4·2 billion this year. That is an enormous increase. We hope to save something like £500 million, which is only one sixth of the increase that has occurred in our time. I say to the right hon. Gentleman that the taxpayers of this country could not afford his programmes.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, whatever decision is made by the United States Congress on disinvestment with South Africa, this Government will continue to encourage investment and trade with that country, not only for the 150,000 or so jobs that it generates over here, but for the sake of the underprivileged blacks in South Africa itself, for whom disinvestment would cause great harm and distress?

The Prime Minister: I am aware of the moves in Congress. Several different Bills are under consideration. We cannot speculate on the outcome. It remains our view that sanctions and disinvestment will not bring about the changes that we all wish to see in South Africa.

Mr. Nelson: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the decision today by FIFA to ban all English clubs from all international football matches? Does she agree that that is a wholly justified decision, which gives us a proper opportunity to put our own house in order?

The Prime Minister: That is the decision that FIFA has made. I think that we fully understand why it has made it. I hope that we shall be able to take steps that will restore our good name both at home and in international football.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Will the Prime Minister spare a moment this afternoon—I am sure that she will—to convey to her Chief Whip an expression of the delight which today's news has caused in all parts of the House?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

The Prime Minister: I thank the right hon. Gentleman most warmly, and I am grateful for the response that his question has evoked from all parts of the House.

Q2. **Mr. Terry Davis** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Davis: Was the Prime Minister consulted about the disgraceful decision to announce the Government's decision on nurses' pay by means of a written answer? Does she really think that a written answer is more appropriate than a statement in the House on a matter of such interest to hon. Members on both sides of the House?

The Prime Minister: Since 1979 the decisions on review body reports have normally been announced by written answer. Under Labour, it was the normal practice for decisions to be announced by written answer.

Mr. Baldry: Does not the scale of starvation in Sudan and sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate the need for a continuing, co-ordinated international response to solving the problem of starvation in Africa? As both the United States and Russia have been somewhat partisan in wanting to establish spheres of influence in north Africa, does not

that give Britain a marvellous opportunity to take a positive lead in the United Nations to try to ensure that we can eliminate starvation from the world by the year 2000?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, we have announced that we are sending an extra Hercules to the Sudan. We have provided some money for a light aircraft. We are also taking part in European action to try to get more of the food well distributed in the Sudan. I take my hon. Friend's point about taking the lead in the United Nations. The United States has also been generous in the food that it is planning to send to the Sudan.

Q3. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Banks: Will the Prime Minister take time today to read the report by the independent firm of City accountants, Coopers and Lybrand, which shows that the transitional cost for the abolition of the Greater London council ranges between £122 million and £167 million? In view of that enormous cost and the defeats that her Government's Bill is now experiencing in the House of Lords, will she take this opportunity to drop her personal and vindictive campaign against the GLC, sack her Secretary of State for the Environment at the next reshuffle and accompany me across Westminster bridge to make her peace with Ken Livingstone and the GLC?

The Prime Minister: I understand that the report estimates the transitional costs of change that arise from redundancy payments, which would occur in any event if the GLC chose to run its affairs efficiently. The report to which the hon. Gentleman has kindly drawn attention also shows that annual savings will flow from the abolition of the GLC and that the GLC is grossly overmanned at present.

Q4. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is so concerned about the cost of the GLC, why does he not offer to abandon his chauffeur-driven limousine?

Mr. Tony Banks: Because it is too comfortable.

The Prime Minister: I am not responsible for the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Will the Prime Minister be in the House to vote against the outrageous motion that will be before the House tomorrow? If not, would she care to tell the House whether she supports her right hon. Friend and colleague the Leader of the House in that matter?

The Prime Minister: Of course I support my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. I shall be around, but whether I shall be around when the vote occurs I cannot tell, because I have two or three overseas visitors to see.

Q5. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. Friend aware that anyone who knows anything about the social security system—a category of people which unfortunately does not include the Leader of the Opposition or the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) — knows that the overwhelming requirement is for a system which is simpler and more understandable to those who use it and which directs more of the expenditure to those in real need? Is she aware that, accordingly, the proposals announced by the Government on Monday have been very warmly welcomed?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the proposals have been warmly welcomed. They are also very realistic. I agree that we should have benefits which we are satisfied a future Government can deliver, and not the empty promises that we get from the Opposition.

Q6. **Mr. Alton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Alton: Is the Prime Minister aware that Sir John Hermon, the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, has not met his opposite number, Laurence Wren, Chief of the Garda, in the past two years? Does she agree that public recriminations between the two men does not assist the fight against terrorism?

The Prime Minister: Consultations between the Garda and the RUC do not necessarily have to be conducted at the top level. The consultations are conducted very well and co-operation is close, for which we are very grateful.

Q7. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Brown: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to deny press reports suggesting that the Government may be going cool on the introduction of legislation relating to the Green Paper on compulsory tendering for local authorities?

The Prime Minister: The Government are very anxious that more competition should be introduced into local authority contracts. That is our policy and it will continue to be so.

Mr. James Callaghan: If the Prime Minister is in the House tomorrow, will she be able, as I hope, to vote with me against the proposed abuse of procedures?

The Prime Minister: Many invitations have been thrust upon me from all parts of the House. I hope that I shall be around to respond to one of them.

Q8. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. MacKay: In the light of the tragic events in Brussels last week, does my right hon. Friend agree that, with the notable exception of the Cambridge case, the punishments meted out by the courts have been woefully inadequate and no deterrent whatever to football hooliganism?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the Cambridge case heralded a new era. I should also point out that the Court of Appeal had previously made it abundantly clear that, in serious cases of violence at football grounds, the right sentence should be a prison sentence. I hope that that will be observed in all other courts.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 10 JUNE—Opposition Day (8th Allotted day, second part). A debate on the 15th anniversary of the Royal Assent to the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Bill on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Remaining stages of the Food and Environment Protection Bill *[Lords]*.

TUESDAY 11 JUNE—Opposition Day (14th Allotted Day). A debate titled "The need for urgent new measures to deal with famine and remedy the debt crisis in developing countries", followed by a debate titled "Government responsibility for the desperate plight of young people". Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Remaining stages of the Enduring Powers of Attorney Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion on Historic Churches (Northern Ireland) Order.

WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE AND THURSDAY 13 JUNE — Debate on a motion to approve the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985, Cmnd. 9430.

FRIDAY 14 JUNE—A debate on the Government's policy for science which will arise on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 17 JUNE—A debate on a Government motion to approve the White Paper on airports policy, Cmnd. 9542.

Mr. Kinnock: The right hon. Gentleman will have heard the dissatisfaction with the fact that the nurses' pay award was announced in a written answer. Will he ensure that we have a statement at the earliest opportunity so that the Secretary of State for Social Services can be properly questioned on a matter that is important to hon. Members on both sides of the House and to the general public?

Secondly, has a date been fixed for a two-day debate in Government time on the so-called Fowler review? The right hon. Gentleman will have seen the reports in *The Times* and elsewhere that Whitehall sources have made it clear that it is part of the Government's tactics to keep the Opposition, the public and, presumably, Conservative Back-Bench Members in the dark about the impact of the changes. May we have his co-operation in initiating a debate so that we can lighten the darkness?

Thirdly, when may we have a statement on last week's decision of the European Court of Human Rights, which ruled that the Government have been unlawfully discriminating against husbands and male fiancés who wish to come to Britain? As he will recall, the Home Secretary dodged making a statement this week. Will he ensure that we get a statement next week so that the 3,350 men involved may have some idea of their future?

Fourthly, the Leader of the House will recall that we have been asking repeatedly for a debate in Government time on the proposed closure of 29 skillcentres. This week, we heard the announcement that all but two of those skillcentres will close — the two being in relatively marginal Conservative-held seats. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the issue is now even more urgent and will he ensure that hon. Members on both sides of the House are given an early opportunity to debate the matter?

Fifthly, may I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to the reports today of the Foreign Secretary's warning to the United States Government not to breach the 1979 strategic arms limitation treaty and so undermine the Geneva arms talks? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure an early statement to the House on this subject, and will he remember that the Opposition have asked several times for a debate on the straegic defence initiative which is clearly of interest to the House and to the country?

Finally, will he convey, through the usual channels, of course, my best wishes and those of my right hon. and hon. Friends to the Government Chief Whip and his fiancée for their future happiness?

Mr. Biffen: I wholeheartedly reverse the order of the right hon. Gentleman's questions—I shall of course pass on those good wishes to my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip. I know, as does the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) that, in doing that, I shall have the endorsement of the entire House.

As for the strategic arms limitation treaty, I shall of course draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary to the right hon. Gentleman's points. It raises all of the issues that are central to a discussion of the defence Estimates.

I suggest that we might consider the request for a debate about skillcentres through the usual channels. I shall refer my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to the right hon. Gentleman's request for a statement on the recent ruling of the European Court of Human Rights as it affects the access to Britain of certain classes of immigrant.

I note the right hon. Gentleman's request for a two-day debate on the social security review. Perhaps the timing and length of that debate can be considered further through the usual channels. I was a little distressed to find that the right hon. Gentleman had to pray in aid evidence from *The Times* to sustain his case, but as he then asked for enlightenment I understood why he needed such remedy. Questions about nurses' pay can be examined through the usual channels, but I must observe that what has been done today is precisely what happened under the preceding Labour Government.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): If the worse comes to the worst tomorrow and we find ourselves sitting through the weekend, how can I then return in happy plight that am debarred the benefit of rest? When life's—day's —oppression is not eased by night, and day by day—day by night—and night by day oppressed?

Mr. Biffen: If my hon. Friend rerehearses a little more that speech which he intends to give tomorrow, he may find by then that it is so effective that he need have no fear.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Will the Leader of the House find time for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a statement on the encouragement which I hope he is giving the Office of Fair Trading to block the takeover of Eurolex, the computer database of English, Scottish and European law, by Butterworths, which has closed it down and dismissed all the staff to create a world monopoly for the United States-owned Lexis service for which Butterworths acts merely

as the British agent? Is that not an outrageous demonstration of the Government's lack of any serious information technology policy?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot accept the strictures implicit in the hon. Gentleman's question, but I shall refer his request to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the heavy demand of right hon. and hon. Members to speak in last January's debate on airports policy and therefore consider extending the debate on Monday week at least until midnight so that many more of us can congratulate the Government on yesterday's excellent statement?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend advances a persuasive argument for the innovation that he seeks. The timing will be considered.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the change in immigration rules which requires visas from citizens of Sri Lanka who have come to Britain as refugees raises an important principle which is quite distinct from that raised by the other immigration matter that has been raised? Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore find time for the prayer relating to the change that I have described which has been tabled by my right hon. and hon. Friends?

Mr. Biffen: I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's point. Perhaps the matter could be considered through the usual channels.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): For the third week running, may I ask my right hon. Friend to make my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of Health an offer that we hope he cannot refuse—to make a statement to the House on an appeal system regarding the limited list of drugs? The matter is now getting very urgent.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend has made his point courteously and persistently, and I shall most certainly take it up again.

Mr. J. D. Concannon (Mansfield): Will the Leader of the House impress upon the Prime Minister the need for a statement next week, after her meeting with King Hussein of Jordan and the Foreign Secretary of Israel, on their views on peace in the middle east and the role that the PLO will play as the representative of the Palestinians?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly pass on that request to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to tell my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), in case he has not noticed, that the idea behind moving the sludge works at Perry Oaks is not to plant daisies? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if the motion on Monday week is lost, progress at Stansted could not be made? Will my right hon. Friend make that clear?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend's point obviously has a great deal of force. I should have thought that it would be much better deployed in the context of the debate rather than in trying to persuade me to put a shadow over the debate by giving an answer.

Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk (Knowsley, North): Given that those of us who have recently been in Sri Lanka have first hand and substantial evidence of brutality and the atrocities committed against the Tamil community and that many thousands of that minority community live in deep and serious fear of their physical safety and lives, may we have an early debate on the Government's inhumane and callous policy of refusing admission to refugees from that country, with all the horrendous consequences for their personal safety that flow from that policy?

Mr. Biffen: I realise that this subject gives rise to deep and sincere feelings. I shall report them to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, but I cannot be optimistic and suggest that there will be an early debate.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the lack of religious and moral teaching, discipline and, above all, parental responsibility are the main causes of so much of the violence in our society? Cannot we discuss these important and vital matters?

Mr. Biffen: I totally agree with my hon. Friend, but Government time will not be available for such a debate —certainly not in the near future. Hon. Members have other opportunities, and I suggest that they pursue them.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Will the right hon. Gentleman give sympathetic consideration to our request for a one-hour extension of the debate on Tuesday on the Northern Ireland order?

Mr. Biffen: Most certainly. Perhaps that matter could be considered through the usual channels.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): The House gave an overwhelming Second Reading to the Bill introduced by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), but, despite that, many of us who voted in support of the Bill have distinct reservations about the tactics that will, apparently, be employed tomorrow. Will my right hon. Friend reconsider his previous position on this matter and, even at this late hour, give an undertaking that Government time will be made available so that this important measure is given the proper consideration that it deserves?

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that question, which certainly was not planted. I want to make it quite clear—I want there to be no ambiguity about this — that there is no prospect of Government time being made available.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): What contingency plans has the right hon. Gentleman made for the House sitting on Saturday and Sunday? If this happens, will the right hon. Gentleman make arrangements to ensure that those responsible will be surcharged?

Mr. Biffen: In order to give the most appropriate answer to that question, I would need more time for reflection than is available to me at the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): As my right hon. Friend is a master not only of repartee but of parliamentary procedure, will he make it plain that what is contemplated and proposed by some of our colleagues for tomorrow is entirely proper and is not an abuse of the procedures of the House?

Mr. Biffen: It is far better if these arguments are adduced within the more relaxed circumstances of the

[Mr. Biffen]

debate than in question and answer at this time. I can confirm that there seems to be clear evidence that the proposed action has been ruled to be in order.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): In view of the announcement at about lunch time today by Imperial Tobacco plc that it intends to close its factory in east Newcastle with a loss of 600 jobs and that, in addition it intends to sack 1,100 people during the next two years, will the right hon. Gentleman find time for a discussion on the employment problems faced by constituencies that rely upon the tobacco industry for employment?

Mr. Biffen: I shall, of course, draw the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, but the hon. Gentleman may recall that employment questions will be dealt with next Tuesday.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Reverting to the debate on airports policy on Monday week, may we know the basis upon which it is to take place? If it is simply to take note of the White Paper and the House refuses so to do, will that mean that the Secretary of State for Transport will have to re-think the policy that he announced in the House yesterday?

Mr. Biffen: I have already indicated that the motion on Monday 17 June will be a Government motion to approve the White Paper.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Has the Leader of the House noticed that on several occasions recently the Secretary of State for the appropriate Department has not appeared at the Dispatch Box at Question Time? The latest example was on Tuesday of this week, when the Secretary of State for Defence was unable to be present because apparently he was on an official visit to Denmark.

Bearing in mind that Secretaries of State are required to be here for questions on only one day in a month, is it not possible for them to arrange their official visits so that they are not prevented from being here to answer questions?

Mr. Biffen: Obviously I would be the first to acquiesce in the proposition that it is important that Secretaries of State should, whenever possible, be here at the Dispatch Box to take their questions. I believe that that view is shared throughout the Administration. But there are occasions when it is not possible, and I think we have to understand that.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Does my right hon. Friend intend to speak tomorrow in the capacity that he recently described as "the boss's nark", or does he agree that Back Benchers are just as much entitled to use rules of order and procedure, without accusations of abuse, as are the Government who they are supposed to control?

Mr. Biffen: I shall speak as Leader of the House, and I shall try to tread as delicately as I can.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): If tomorrow's business ran through not only Saturday and Sunday but into Monday, will the Leader of the House confirm that, under the Standing Orders of the House, business could be adjourned after Monday till the following Monday? In those circumstances, does he intend to table a motion to avoid that eventuality?

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that we have quite got to the point where I have to take that decision.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Will my right hon. Friend take pity on Mr. Speaker and help him in relation to the debate on airports policy? There has not been adequate time, at any Question Time when the matter could be raised, for all of us to be heard. In particular, those who represent the area most affected by the decision, east Hertfordshire and Essex, have not had adequate time because, quite rightly, Mr. Speaker, has had to give time to hon. Members from other parts of the country with an interest in the matter.

My constituents are feeling very aggrieved that we have not had adequate time to point out to the House and to the country the very serious difficulties in which the decision places us. Therefore, will my right hon. Friend at least consider extending the debate by two hours?

Mr. Biffen: The request for an extension has already been made to me, and it will be sympathetically considered.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In answering my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), the Leader of the House was his usual model of courtesy, but has he really understood the enormity of what has happened in relation to Butterworths and Eurolex? The computer data are going to the United States. Should not he, directly or through the Department of Trade, contact the Office of Fair Trading? Although only 53 jobs are involved at present, there is a huge potential job loss. Incidentally, Parliament is a major customer, and it looks as though Parliament's expenses in regard to Eurolex will be greatly increased by what has happened.

May I offer the Leader of the House a constructive suggestion? May I suggest that he should get the Minister for Trade to make a statement at 11 am tomorrow on the vital matter that my hon. Friend has raised?

Mr. Biffen: There is just a suspicion that having such a statement at 11 am tomorrow would be seen as trivialising the matter. There would be a possibility of its being misinterpreted. I shall, of course, convey to my right hon. Friend the anxieties of the hon. Members for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) and Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Has my right hon. Friend taken note of early-day motion 714 concerning a *Yorkshire Post* investigation into drug abuse?

[That this House is concerned at the new evidence in Yorkshire of illegal drug trafficking and the involvement of young people in hard drug abuse; congratulates the Yorkshire Post on its detailed investigation into this urgent and serious problem; notes that the Select Committees on Home Affairs and on Social Services are undertaking enquiries into drug abuse; and calls for an early Parliamentary debate on their proposals further to inhibit supply and to rehabilitate addicts.]

In view of the serious facts revealed by that investigation and the fact that this is one of the most significant issues of our time, will he arrange an early and full-length debate on the interim report of the Home Office Select Committee on the subject?

Mr. Biffen: I join my hon. Friend in acknowledging the importance of the topic. He will note, however, that no Government time has been made available for a debate

on the issue in the business that has been announced, and I do not see there being time available in the near future now that we are in that part of the parliamentary year just ahead of the summer recess. However, my hon. Friend will be aware that he can pursue these matters through private Members' time.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): In view of the decision by the House of Representatives in the United States in relation to South Africa and the exchanges today during Prime Minister's Question Time, does the Leader of the House agree that we should have an early opportunity to debate this issue?

Mr. Biffen: I have no doubt that it would be a good debate, but there is no Government time available in the near future.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 708, which stands in my name and the names of 20 other hon. Members, giving all-party support for the establishment of a missing child unit within the Home Office?

[That this House welcomes the designation of Saturday 25th May as International Day of the Missing Child; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to establish a missing child unit within the Home Office with a central computer detailing all missing children throughout the United Kingdom, and not just within the Metropolitan Police area.]

Is he aware that great concern is felt about the fact that last year more than 20,000 children went missing, yet inadequate, if any, statistics are kept about these cases? On the subject of children, I hope that my right hon. Friend will not take it personally when tomorrow more than 100 hon. Members in all parts of the House express their concern for the unborn child and do not support his objection to our motion. May I respectfully remind him that most hon. Members feel that tomorrow is a private Members' day and regret that any form of Government interference, even if indirectly, should occur?

Mr. Biffen: I note my hon. Friend's remarks in relation to tomorrow's debate. I also appreciate the significance of the first part of his question and hope that he will use his well known skill and initiative as a private Member in getting the issue debated. There simply is not Government time to cover all these issues.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South): Has the Leader of the House seen the statistics released by the Department of Employment to me this week showing that for this year's 517,000 school leavers there exist only 12,355 vacancies at careers offices? Is he aware that 56 per cent. of careers offices in Britain have 10 or fewer vacancies; that in Scotland the figure is 94 per cent.; that in Wales, only two careers offices have more than 10 vacancies; and that 95 per cent. of careers offices have fewer than 10 vacancies? When in Government time will there be a debate on the bleak and dismal future that the Tory Government are offering this year's school leavers?

Mr. Biffen: I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not regard Opposition time as second best, because on Tuesday there will be a debate on the subject of young people and I hope that he will be able to make a speech on that occasion.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Has the right hon. Gentleman been made aware during his especially busy day today that the Arts Council held an emergency press conference this morning at which it announced that there would be a £30 million shortfall in the moneys needed to support the arts following the Government's messing about with the GLC and metropolitan counties? What do the Government intend to do to provide that necessary funding of £30 million?

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that there will be a statement on that subject next week, but I shall draw to the attention of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, who anwers for the arts in the House, the situation described by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): You, Mr. Speaker, and the Leader of the House will be aware of the great interest that I have expressed over the years, both in the House and in Committee upstairs, in the National Health Service. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the need for a statement to be made next week on the question of nurses' pay? We shall not have time to table questions before the Minister for Health next answers questions in the House on Tuesday. After that, there will be only one further occasion when health questions will be answered before the summer recess.

The issue affects half a million nurses and midwives and yet the announcement is to be made in a written answer which I shall not be able to see until tomorrow morning. Will the right hon. Gentleman please do something for Back-Bench Members on this important matter?

Mr. Biffen: The Leader of the Opposition made a request about the way in which the matter should be handled and I said that it could be considered through the usual channels. I cannot go beyond that. However, the procedure this year is precisely the same as it has been for many years.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Why do the Government persist in refusing to make a statement at the Dispatch Box on the loss of the Lear Fan company in Ulster? Why do they persist in replying only in written answers? What are they trying to hide? As a vast amount of public money is involved, should not the Minister be made accountable to the House by making a statement on which we can question him?

Mr. Biffen: I shall refer those remarks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Questions about Northern Ireland are first on the Order Paper next Thursday.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): In view of the persistent and regrettable failure of courts, and especially of tribunals, to take properly into account the statutory codes set by the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, and of the exclusion from the protection of the law of single people, including widows and widowers, when can we have a debate in Government time on equal opportunities? Is the Leader of the House aware that inequality in many respects is growing in Britain?

Mr. Biffen: I see little prospect in the near future of such a debate in Government time because Government time is a rare and valued commodity at this time of year. The hon. and learned Gentleman has other opportunities to raise such matters in the House.

Norman Shaw South (Water Supply)

3.58 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement about contamination of tap water in the Norman Shaw South building.

At 11.30 am on Tuesday 4 June, 22 gallons of anti-corrosive fluid—ENTEC 338—intended for the central heating tank were poured into a neighbouring tank serving the hand washbasins and wcs in the building. This was an inexcusable error by the Property Services Agency, for which I accept full responsibility.

The fluid concerned was a proprietary aqueous solution containing:

Sodium Nitrite	30·00 per cent.
Borax	2·00 per cent.
Caustic Soda	0·10 per cent.
Mercapto-benzo-thi-azole	0·05 per cent.

The House will wish to know how this error occurred, what steps were taken to warn all concerned and to remove the contamination, and what is being done to prevent any recurrence. I have ordered a full investigation into these matters and I shall publish the report. In the meantime, the House will wish to know what information is available to me.

First, I would say that I was deeply concerned to learn yesterday that Mrs. Jacqueline Winter, the secretary to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), had been taken seriously ill in her office in the Norman Shaw South building on Tuesday afternoon. It has since become clear that this was connected with her having drunk water from a tap at a washbasin there. I am happy to be able to tell the House that she has now been released from hospital and is recovering at home. I am sure that I speak for the whole House in wishing Mrs. Winter a full and speedy recovery.

At 2.50 pm on 4 June the Parliamentary Works Office received a complaint that the water coming from the washbasin taps in the wc adjacent to the office where Mrs. Winter works had a foul taste. A technical officer was sent at 3.30 pm to investigate by the Parliamentary Works Office. He was unable to find any obvious cause of the trouble and decided to seek specialist advice. Neither he nor the Parliamentary Works Office was aware at that time that Mrs. Winter had been taken ill.

No connection was made between Mrs. Winter's illness and the water supply until 6.45 pm, when a request for a water sample was received from the Westminster hospital. The Parliamentary Works Officer gave his permission immediately on being made aware of that request. At the same time he ordered a detailed check to be made by his staff, who discovered the chemical contamination at 8.50 pm.

The water system was fully flushed five times during Tuesday night. The Government chemist was called in first thing on Wednesday morning to test the water. It was found to be suitable for washing, but chemicals were still found in concentrations which made it unsuitable for drinking.

During Tuesday night, warning notices had been put over a number of washbasin taps, and that process was completed on Wednesday morning. In addition, the House authorities made a warning announcement over the public address system in the building on Wednesday morning.

The water system was again flushed twice last night. Tests by the Government chemist this morning have shown a further marked reduction in the contamination, though not to a level which would be acceptable for drinking. Further cleansing action is being taken, and the Government chemist will continue with his checks for as long as necessary.

There are taps in the building marked "drinking water", and these are not fed from the tank supplying the washbasins. Tests have confirmed that water from these taps has not been affected.

I must also tell the House that it is likely that a similar mistake was made in early May, and the investigation will cover that aspect and the response to the complaints made at that time.

I have no doubt that the urgent investigation which I have set in hand will suggest improvements both in working practice and in communications between all concerned with the health and safety of those who work in these buildings. I can assure the House that the lessons learnt from this unfortunate incident will be vigorously applied, and I apologise to the House and its staff for what has occurred.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): We are grateful to the Minister for the terms in which he made his statement and his ready acceptance of responsibility for what happened. I am sure that I speak on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends in associating us with the Minister's expressions of sympathy for Mrs. Winter and his wish for her speedy recovery.

A grossly unsatisfactory position has been disclosed by the incident. I am advised by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who has great scientific expertise in this area, that in some strength the substance is a deadly combination of corrosive and toxic chemicals. It is fortunate that more people are not suffering seriously as a result of the mistake.

In his statement, the Minister said that it was likely that a similar mistake was made in early May. I can tell the House that—not least because I have a direct interest in the water supply in Norman Shaw South because my secretary works in that building—at lunchtime I asked to see the complaints book for that building. It disclosed that complaints about the state of the water were made on 7 May, and again on 16 May. I have been assured that in both cases the attendants passed the complaints on to those responsible for securing the safety of the water supply. I am also told by staff who work there that at that stage they complained of the water tasting of caustic soda—the same substance as that mentioned in the statement.

I should be glad to hear the Minister's comments on that because it appears that little effective action to ensure that a mistake of that sort would not be made again was taken between the first reporting of the mistake on 7 May and the day before the poisoning of Mrs. Winter.

Will the inquiry cover the security aspects of the incident? Plainly, what could be done by mistake could also be done deliberately by men with evil intent. I think that the House is aware that neither the Health and Safety Executive nor environmental health officers have any formal authority within the Palace of Westminster. Does that lack of authority also extend to the outbuildings of the Palace that house the offices, such as the Norman Shaw buildings? In any event, is it not time that the legislation and the full powers of the HSE and the environmental

health officers—having been given by this House and the other place—were applied to the Palace? Will they be invited in?

The delay in dealing speedily and effectively with these complaints when they were first made is, in our judgment, symptomatic of an "Upstairs Downstairs" attitude all too prevalent in the Palace of Westminster. While working conditions for most Members of the House are poor, those for staff employed by Members are wholly unacceptable. Many work in garrets and basements that are little more than corridors, without natural light or ventilation, in near Dickensian conditions. It is a sorry tale, all too typical of the consequences of the ramshackle and penny-pinching attitude displayed towards facilities for Members of this House and their staff in what is supposed to be the Mother of Parliaments.

Sir George Young: On the hon. Gentleman's last point, I hoped that I had made it clear that the cause of this particular incident was an employee putting chemicals in the wrong tank. It would be wrong to attribute the incident to the more general problems that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

On the question of toxicity, I have looked at the container from which the chemicals were poured, and it states, "Harmful if swallowed". Clearly, it is not to be consumed.

Like the hon. Gentleman, I have inspected the log books kept by the attendants at the entrance to the building, and I saw the entries to which he referred. One matter at which the investigation will most certainly look is what action was taken to follow up the complaints registered in that book.

Given that the solution was likely to be diluted after a few days, it is probable that if an analysis of the water was carried out later in the month, the presence of the chemical would not have been detected.

Some of the other matters to which the hon. Gentleman referred relate to responsibilities of other Departments or other parts of the building. The question of security is a matter for a Committee of this House. I have no doubt that it will take note of what the hon. Gentleman said. Likewise, I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to what the hon. Gentleman said about the Health and Safety Executive.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I thank my hon. Friend for the unequivocal apology that he has given us this afternoon. I wish to echo his sentiments that we all hope that Mrs. Winter recovers speedily. Wherever any water supply is being interfered with there should be not only a consistent but a constant effort to inform all members of staff—those employed in Norman Shaw South or any other part of the Palace —of the activities of those involved.

The dates of 7 and 16 May have been mentioned. My secretary also works in Norman Shaw South, and she confirms that on those days no one was informed of any work on the water supplies. They were turned off, and when they were reinstated the problems began.

There is a Tannoy system, so is it not possible that regular messages—which, after all, are broadcast over the Tannoy system about such matters as fire hazards—could be broadcast to inform staff of what is happening?

Sir George Young: I understand that the recent bulletin on Mrs. Winter said that there was no reason why a complete recovery should not be made, and I was delighted to hear that.

On the important point about communications, I can tell my hon. Friend that it is a matter that I wish to consider. Responsibility for broadcasting over the Tannoy system rests with the Serjeant at Arms' Department, and I shall be studying the liaison between my Department and that Department to ensure that when information such as that available on Tuesday is made known hon. Members are informed quickly. As staff arrive at the Norman Shaw buildings throughout the morning, I shall take up the point about regular broadcasts, rather than—as I understand it —the one broadcast that was made.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I thank the Minister for the swift action that he took this morning and also for wishing my secretary a speedy return to good health. I thank the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) for associating himself with the Minister's remarks. I can tell the House that I spoke to my secretary not long ago, and she is beginning to recover. She has returned home to her husband. She wishes to thank people for all the good wishes that they have sent her.

Is the Minister aware that telephone complaints were made to the Serjeant at Arms' office by researchers and secretaries during the course of the last four weeks—quite apart from those logged in the complaints book? Can he tell me why, when my secretary's husband yesterday requested a sample of water on behalf of the hospital, he was initially denied that sample for the hospital authorities?

Does the Minister agree that the PSA is guilty of the most wilful negligence in not having acted sooner, having known since the beginning of May of the seriousness of the position? Will he also accept that this case highlights yet again the deplorable lack of facilities for many members of our staff in this building and the urgent need to extend the shops, offices and factories legislation to cover the Palace of Westminster?

Sir George Young: When the hon. Gentleman told me this morning on the telephone of the request for a sample, which he said had been denied, I made inquiries. I understand that my staff agreed to the request and would not have obstructed anybody who wanted to analyse the water. I shall make further inquiries, through the investigation, to find out who refused the sample.

As for negligence by the PSA, the problem is that in early May we had not discovered the incident. Had we done so, I hope that we should have taken effective action. I shall look into the information that was made available to the Serjeant at Arms during the preceding four weeks to see what follow-up action was taken after those numerous complaints. I hope that the report I have initiated can be published quickly.

Mr. Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the water supply installation in Norman Shaw South is almost prehistoric? The staff of the House deserve great credit for keeping it working. I have worked in Norman Shaw South for the past eight years. Is it not clear that we should not drink water other than from taps that are clearly marked "drinking water"? The notices saying "drinking water only" should be reinforced and everybody who works in Norman Shaw South should receive a

[Mr. Jim Spicer]

personal letter saying that any other water is unfit for human consumption. A major tragedy on this occasion has been avoided, but we must make certain that we do not have a near-shave again.

Sir George Young: I understand that hon. Members and staff have been reminded that they should drink water only from taps that are so marked. I endorse the advice that my hon. Friend has given.

As for his remarks about the equipment, it is historic rather than prehistoric. I saw the two tanks this morning. They are next to each other. One is a feed and expansion tank. The other is a cold water down-service tank. The mistake was to put the chemicals in the wrong tank. It would be wrong to attribute this error to the quality of the building or to any other broader conditions. It was an inexcusable human error.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): It was my secretary, Mrs. Gray, who raised the alarm about the incident on Tuesday. Will the Under-Secretary of State accept that it took far too long to give a warning about the danger of water contamination in Norman Shaw South? As the water may have been contaminated for as long as a month, will he make arrangements for appropriate medical advice to be given to the people who work in Norman Shaw South? Finally, will he say a little more about liability for injury to the secretaries of hon. Members in similar circumstances? The Under-Secretary of State said that he accepts responsibility. Do the Government accept liability for injuries sustained in such circumstances?

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman's last point would best be pursued with the legal advisers of my Department rather than across the Floor of the House.

We shall have to await the outcome of the investigation that I have set in hand before we know what was the timescale of the series of events on Tuesday and Wednesday morning of this week and can decide whether more could be done to alert people more quickly when something goes wrong. It would make sense for anybody in Norman Shaw North or Norman Shaw South who feels ill to consult quickly his medical adviser or doctor. Such advice has already been given.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that some years ago those who had offices in Norman Shaw South were asked not to drink water from taps other than those marked "drinking water"? That notice disappeared and we were given to understand that all the water in Norman Shaw South was safe.

Is my hon. Friend further aware that when the notices went up yesterday they gave no indication of the seriousness of this problem? Nor was the one announcement that was broadcast over the Tannoy system at all informative. Some people had to telephone the attendants because the announcement was fairly inaudible and ask precisely what had been said. Will these matters, including the former alleged lead poisoning that led to the advice not to drink water, be considered by the inquiry? Will my hon. Friend also bear in mind that if Norman Shaw South had been finished to the same standard as Norman Shaw North this unfortunate statement would not have had to be made today?

Sir George Young: The answer to the first half of my hon. Friend's question is yes: those matters will be considered. I note my hon. Friend's other remarks.

Mr. Walter Harrison (Wakefield): I compliment the Under-Secretary of State on having tried to clear up this matter expeditiously, but, as usual, communications are not as good as they should be. We believe that we can communicate with each other quickly in Parliament, but we have never taken decisive measures about communications because we are frightened of abusing the privileges of Parliament. When there is an emergency everybody in the building—all 9,500 of them—should be alerted. I am pleased to hear that Mrs. Winter is recovering.

I have been a Member of Parliament for 21 years and have never drunk a drop of water out of a tap. I have always mixed it, and the stuff I mix it with usually counteracts anything that may be in the water. When I heard that Mrs. Winter was not too well because of the water she had drunk I checked the water I had been drinking and found that it went back to before 30 September 1983. I have always been suspicious of London water. I read an article that said that it was retreaded about 25 times. Therefore, I decided to drink not London water but bottled water.

My "Highland Spring" water, which carries an advertisement about BUPA, also refers to a fitness competition, the closing date for which was 30 September 1983. So I was in a bit of a panic. I had no trouble with my tummy, but I said to the Manager of the Catering Department, "How long have we had this water? I have just checked the label and it says September 1983." He said, "I'll you tell what I'll do".

Mr. Speaker: Order. But was it consumed in Norman Shaw South?

Mr. Harrison: "Highland Spring" water is consumed in all parts of the Palace of Westminster. People ought to be cautious about drinking London water. I say to the Catering Department—and I have put down a question about this—that "Highland Spring" water should be withdrawn, although I do not know what would replace it. Water is essential, and it must be clean. Although the Under-Secretary of State is trying to do his best, the emergency signal must be sent out, "Do not drink London water, irrespective of whether it is identified". We will export Yorkshire water. Will the hon. Gentleman do something about this?

Sir George Young: I think that I would be in some difficulty if I attempted to wind up the debate that the right hon. Gentleman has initiated. As a London Member of Parliament, there is no way that I can advise constituents not to drink London water. But, on the more serious point, the right hon. Gentleman has responsibility for security in the Palace. No doubt we can interpret his responsibilities for security sufficiently broadly to encompass the many remarks that he made in his intervention, and concentrate on those that are relevant, particularly with regard to communications.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. After that interesting exchange, we should move on.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Those of us who work very closely with the Serjeant at Arms on the Services Committee

always find his staff and him more than responsive to representations from hon. Members. We find it unacceptable that the Minister should try to pass the buck when these responsibilities lie entirely within his Department and the PSA.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not want to take further points of order on this matter——

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will, of course, take a point of order from the Liberal Chief Whip, but I am trying to protect his party's Opposition day.

Mr. Beith: I know full well that I have an interest in getting on with the debate that is to follow, but I should point out that it was my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) who asked yesterday for a statement. In response to my hon. Friend, the Leader of the House said that a statement would be made. In the circumstances, I think it only reasonable to ask you to give my hon. Friend the opportunity to question the Minister on his statement.

Mr. Speaker: I thought that it was the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) who was concerned about this matter. Any further questions on the statement will only take time out of the Liberal party's Opposition day. However, if it is true that the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) requested the statement—I was not aware of that—I shall allow him to put a question to the Minister. However, such latitude is very exceptional and should not be taken as a precedent.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for his assurances and, in particular, for the frank way in which he has accepted responsibility for this matter. I also associate myself with the comments made by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) concerning the disgraceful conditions in which some of our staff have to work.

I am particularly grateful to the Minister for agreeing to look at the question of communications. Is it not true that the Serjeant at Arms and his staff were not informed at 8.50 pm on Tuesday of the nature of this potentially horrific accident and that they did not get to know about the accident until hon. Members found out, because it was leaked—or at least given to the press—in information from the PSA late yesterday evening? Was there not a disgraceful lack of communication? Why is it that that information was not afforded to the Serjeant at Arms' staff or to hon. Members, but was leaked instead, nearly 24 hours afterwards, to the press?

Sir George Young: There are two points there. The Serjeant at Arms' staff broadcast the information over the Tannoy on Wednesday morning, so they must have known the information at that time. But I accept that there appears to have been some breakdown in communication between the PSA and the Department of the Serjeant at Arms. That is something that I shall want to consider in order to put right any deficiencies.

I learnt of the incident at about 3 pm yesterday and by 5 pm I had issued a press statement in response to inquiries from the press. Thus the moment that I was aware that there was a demand for information, I prepared a press statement and put it out.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have telephone communications broken down in the House? If not, is it not possible for any hon. Member to telephone the Serjeant at Arms' office, just as I have done many times?

Mr. Speaker: I do not know whether there was any breakdown.

Administration of Justice Bill

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Has it come to your attention that, of the 18 members of the Standing Committee on the Administration of Justice Bill, 12 are solicitors or barristers? In the governing party, which must be assumed to constitute a majority on that Committee, nine out of the 11 Conservative Members are barristers or solicitors. Although we obviously need expertise, there is a division between the public interest, broadly interpreted, and the vested interests of lawyers as a group.

If the Lord Chancellor feels, as he appears to do, that solicitors working for building societies will be exposed to an intolerable conflict of interest if they do conveyancing, are not the Government exposing their Back Benchers to an even more intolerable conflict of interest by asking them to judge between their public and professional interests? Will you, Mr. Speaker, ask the Committee of Selection to reconsider the Standing Committee's composition in order to make it more representative?

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If I, as a barrister, have been put on that Committee, I shall be delighted to give up my place to a non-barrister.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) should take up the matter with the Chairman of the Committee of Selection. It is not for me to draw it to the Chairman's attention. But if what the hon. Gentleman says is correct, the remedy lies in his hands.

The Arts (Funding)

4.26 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the emergency statement issued by the Arts Council today in relation to the critical shortfall in funding for the arts."

The matter is important because it relates to Government legislation and to this morning's statement. When the Government introduced their Bill to abolish the metropolitan authorities and the GLC, it was recognised that it would create a serious situation for the arts. The Minister for the Arts therefore announced an additional £34 million to replace the moneys that would be lost following the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan authorities. It was to be made up of £18 million for galleries, museums and films, and £16 million which was to go directly to the Arts Council to replace the money lost to the performing arts.

Today, the Arts Council has announced that the real figure of loss is not £16 million but £46 million, which is £30 million short of the amount allocated by the Government. The Secretary-General of the Arts Council says that it cannot

"run the South Bank at its present level and cover the replacement of Mets grant even to the major companies."

Sir William Rees-Mogg has said that he is "seriously concerned". From him, that means that we are facing a catastrophe. He said:

"We are asking the Government to consider allocating sufficient funds to secure the future of these organisations and to enable the Council to fulfil its role on the South Bank."

There is a basic shorfall of £30 million. To give hon. Members some measure of its importance to the arts, I should point out that that £30 million would exactly cover the funds needed to finance our four basic national institutions: Covent Garden, the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the English National Opera. It is equal to 2·5 times the amount of money that is given to the entire arts through the Scottish Arts Council, and it is three times the amount of money given to all the regional arts associations in England. It is, therefore, a massive amount of money. It means that the Arts Council cannot carry out the duties imposed on it.

But the matter is urgent in another way too. During the passage of the Bill in this House attempts were made to insert amendments that would have dealt with the problem. Next week the Bill will reach its Report stage in the other place. That gives us our last opportunity to have amendments accepted there and then brought to this House. It is important that hon. Members should be given an opportunity to debate the issue so that the other place can judge our attitude towards it. The information was not known when the House passed the Bill at an earlier stage.

It is impossible to exaggerate the crisis. The Arts Council says that it cannot fulfil its duties. The issue is urgent, because it can be debated and rectified to some extent next week in the other place. The Government could legislate next week if this House made its will known through a debate. Above all, we could give notice of our commitment to replace the total sum of £46 million. I cannot argue the case now but the crisis has been brought

about by a mixture of pique and political malice that has been compounded by stupidity in the Government's failure to do their sums. They must now make good the damage.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the emergency statement issued by the Arts Council today in relation to the critical shortfall in funding for the arts."

The hon. Gentleman knows that the decision that I have to take in this matter is whether to give it precedence over the business set down for today or Monday. I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I do not consider that the matter that he raises is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

BILL PRESENTED

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (MINIMUM AGE)

Mr. David Amess supported by Mr. Richard Ottaway, Mr. Harry Greenway, Mr. Eric Forth, and Mr. Jeremy Hanley, presented a Bill to reduce from 21 years to 18 years the minimum age for election as a Member of the House of Commons: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 155].

Opposition Day

[13TH ALLOTTED DAY]—*considered*

Elderly Persons

4.32 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I beg to move,

That this House, while recognising the need for a review of the social security system, rejects those parts of the Green Paper which are designed to cut costs and will therefore add greatly to the problems of many elderly people on low incomes by reducing their entitlement to help with the high cost of rent and rates, will eventually remove the state earnings-related pension scheme without substantially increasing the basic pension, and will replace a parsimonious death grant scheme with one likely to cause maximum distress at the time of bereavement.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Steel: As this is the first occasion on which the amended Standing Order No. 6 has been brought into use, and the minority parties have a chance to introduce a debate out of slightly more generous time than in the past, it would be churlish to let this opportunity go by without thanking the Leader of the House for enabling this reform to be made. Needless to say, we are not satisfied that we are being given a fair deal, but this is a notable step forward, with the existence of something other than the official Opposition at last being recognised in the Standing Orders.

I am pleased that my colleagues and I took the decision that our first use of this opportunity should be to have a debate on the problems of the elderly. We took that decision before the Whitsun recess knowing that the Green Paper on social security reform would be published before the debate. Although the debate is not to be confined to that Green Paper, it provides the House with an early opportunity to probe the Government further on their intentions in that review.

Beveridge once observed that if one scratched a Tory one would find a pessimist, and if one scratched a Liberal one would find an optimist. If one scratched the Green Paper one would find acute pessimism. Where it is not pessimistic, it is mean-minded. The pessimism is contained in the assumptions set out in paragraph 5.6 of volume 1, which looks at the costs of our pension provisions over the next 20 years. It does so on assumptions of 6·5 to 10 per cent. continuing unemployment, so that the greatest extent of the Government's optimism for the next 20 years is an unemployment level of 6·5 per cent. That is a great contrast with Beveridge's original concept of working out a social security scheme, based on assumptions of reasonably full employment.

The Government's basic assumption is dumbfounding. Week in, week out, we hear of how economic recovery is about to arrive next week, next month or next year, and that the economic miracle has been achieved. Such phrases trip off the tongues of Ministers at weekend speeches, but, when it comes down to the hard facts, the basic assumption throughout the review is of an intolerable level of unemployment in the years to come.

[Mr. Steel]

We are entitled to ask on what growth assumptions in the economy the review is based. Again, pessimism seems to be the order of the day. The only figures that one can find in the review are the page and paragraph numbers.

The first question that I put to the Minister for Social Security is: what is it that you have to hide? Without the figures, as the *Financial Times* commented, it is rather like having an annual report without a profit and loss account. The figures should be given to the House soon, for three reasons. First, no Government or Parliament can contemplate recommending a series of changes to our basic welfare provisions without a pretty good idea of how they will affect those who rely on the welfare state. On Tuesday, the Prime Minister, in answer to questions, said that her refusal to give figures was because of her belief in sound finance. That must be an exotic statement, even by her standards.

The second reason why there have to be figures is that the Secretary of State said, back in April 1984, that the review was to be revenue neutral. How can we tell if that is so without costing? How can we tell if the reforms will save the £1 billion that the Chancellor wants to save without costings?

The third reason why the Government should give the House some figures is that in the housing benefit review section of the report, paragraph 3.19 refers to the illustrative costings for that section. However, they have not been given. They have been leaked in various places, but not here.

While we all welcome the review, the Government have been less than candid, and their failure to publish figures has spread unnecessary fear among claimants, especially pensioners, and this has been done because of media management. However, on the basis of what the report says, we can already identify three sectors in which pensioners will be hard hit—housing benefit, SERPS and the death grant.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I endorse what the right hon. Gentleman says, but he spoke of unnecessary fears. Surely these are necessary fears.

Mr. Steel: That is a play on words, but I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. It is a fear that I fear will turn out to be necessary. However, if we are right in some of the calculations that I shall give, it would be better for the Government to give the figures now so that the population can thoroughly debate the Green Paper.

It has been calculated outside the House that on housing benefit over 6 million people will lose more than £1·40 per week. Is that calculation correct? The Government are in a position to tell us. Before we look at what is proposed on housing benefit, we should do well to remind ourselves of what has already happened to housing benefit in the lifetime of the Government.

In the 1983 Budget, housing benefit was introduced to unify the two existing schemes, but, because the reform was supposedly conducted without costs, many people lost out during the original introduction of the housing benefit scheme. It has had two further cuts, in April and November 1984. Thus we are arriving at the review against a background of at least three previous occasions in the lifetime of this Government when housing financial support for certain people has been cut. The total cut may be about £500 million. Again, the Government are the only people who can tell us whether that figure is right.

I move on to the detail of what is proposed on housing. First, there is the question, on which we were quizzing the Prime Minister on Tuesday, of the 20 per cent. rate demand as a minimum payment from everybody in the future. I asked the Government about that, because it is not clear whether it is intended that people receiving the new income support help with these payments will be subject to the 20 per cent. or not. That is not clear from my reading of the report.

In principle, it is a good idea to cut the number of individual tapers and the rates at which benefit is withdrawn against them, but the Government's proposal for a single taper for rent and rates will hit pensioners particularly hard. I can give a specific case as an example. It concerns a pensioner couple who have paid off their mortgage and have an income of £75 a week, which is hardly living in the lap of luxury. On realistic assumptions, they will lose out substantially, if my calculations are correct. Let us assume a weekly rates bill of £9—a not excessive figure for London. At present, the couple will receive £4·71 housing benefit. Assuming an income support level of £61, which is the current supplementary benefit level, plus a few additions to which pensioners are entitled, their entitlement under the new, combined 70 per cent. taper will be negatived—minus 80p. They will lose all benefit entitlement, and there will be the imposition of the 20 per cent. rates provision. The basic point is that those who pay no rent, who are mainly pensioner owner-occupiers, will be very severely hit by the new proposals in the Green Paper. I should like the Minister to confirm that.

At present, people on supplementary benefit receive help to pay their water rates, but under these proposals, as I understand it, they will receive only about £1 per week. That will prove inadequate, especially against the background of the Government telling water authorities to push up their charges. The Green Paper proposal will hit pensioners severely. Many elderly pople will see their basic weekly standard of living drop substantially as a result of the review.

In regard to the state earnings-related pension scheme, we on these Benches will not be able to support its abolition without a correspondingly large increase in the basic pension. All the pensioner organisations that I have met in recent months — Age Concern, Pensioners' Voice, and so on—say that, while they welcome the individual provisions made for pensioners, they would really like a substantial increase in their basic standard of living. We have always supported that. During the passage of the legislation my noble Friend Lord Banks in another place and my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), who was our spokesman in this House at the time, made it clear that we reckoned that SERPS would turn out to be too expensive. We said we would rather put the money on the basic rate and encourage the growth of occupational pension schemes. The Government have never been generous to pensioners in the basic rate.

We must examine the Green Paper against the background of what has happened in recent years. The breaking of the link between earnings and pensions in 1979 has cost a couple £4·85 and a single pensioner £3 per week. It is also a way of saying that pensioners should not share

automatically in any general growth in the nation's prosperity which, as I shall show in a moment, runs counter to some phrases in the Green Paper.

The effect that the proposals will have on the value of the basic pension is not clear. Paragraph 9.4 of volume 1 suggests that there is to be a reallocation of support towards families with children. The Minister also said that in his statement. It follows that, if the review is to be neutral overall, the people who will lose out will be not families with children, but again mainly pensioners.

Paragraph 7.19 of volume 1 refers to the abolition of SERPS enabling the Government,

"if economic growth permits, to give all the pensioners of the time a share of increasing prosperity through the basic pension."

If we were to put that in jargon terms, it means that the Governmnent's policy is possible jam for the day after tomorrow. That is the only interpretation to put on it. In other words, pensioners will have to wait for a general uplift in the economy, which the Government's own assumption through the 20-year forecast denies will happen, before they can achieve a higher standard of living.

In volume 2, paragraph 1.69 says that the earnings rule, which the Government have been promising to end since 1979, will be ended

"at the earliest opportunity when resources permit".

That is the same message of possible jam the day after tomorrow. What is the Government's long-term intention about the basic pension? We should know before further debate on the Green Paper.

Of all the proposals in the copious volumes of the review, the proposal in regard to the death grant is the meanest. We would face the same problem if we were in government. I well understand that a flat rate grant of £30 that is long out of date cannot be increased suddenly to bring it in today's terms to the level at which it was introduced, because the public expenditure commitment would be enormous.

The Government's proposal is doubly vicious. The individual seeking help for a funeral will have to go to the DHSS to ask for a discretionary payment at a time of maximum grief and bereavement. Moreover, the decision will have to be made quickly, by definition, because of the funeral that is being booked to take place within a dew days. Those are the worst possible conditions in which to have a general discussion of a means-tested benefit.

On top of that I understand that help for funerals is to come out of the new social fund, on which there will be a limit. What will happen towards the end of a financial year if after the money has run out someone asks for help to pay for a funeral? There has been no explanation of how the social fund will operate in general on a fixed sum. In particular, how will it operate if people are inconvenient enough to die towards the end of a financial year? The Government should come clean on that.

I have a positive suggestion. The only reasonable course is to uprate the death grant to a substantial amount — probably £250 — and to say that it is available automatically for those who wish to claim it, but that the Government may claw it back from the estate in due course, after the funeral is over and the bereavement has passed. That would ensure that the money would not go to those who do not need it. I do not know why the Government have not come up with such a scheme.

I have said enough about the Green Paper. There are three other matters that I wish to raise under the heading of the elderly. Many hon. Members are concerned about the tax provisions that we make for those who devote their lives to caring for the elderly. This is surely one of the developing areas of support for the elderly. The network of informal community care throughout the country is massive, but it is often ignored and not greatly encouraged by public authorities.

It was estimated from the 1981 census that about 800,000 people are involved in caring for the handicapped elderly. If we add to that other categories of elderly, who need extensive care but receive it through the informal sector—families, neighbours, and so on—the reasonable figure for informal carers would be able about 1 million. If the work of these people has been done by the state and if, on a modest asssumption, we take three and a half hours a day at £2·90 per hour, the average cost of home helps in the financial year 1982-83 would have been a massive £3·5 billion. Therefore, as a community, we should recognise that these informal carers are extremely important because they do a good job at very low cost. Instead of taking them for granted, we need to formulate policies to support them and recognise the selfless contribution that they make.

The first thing to be done is to extend the improperly named invalid care allowance to married women. At the moment it is discriminatory in that it is paid only to men and women who are not dependent on a breadwinner. I understand that there is before the European Court a case that the Government are likely to lose. It would be more useful and sensible for the Government to give in gracefully and agree that the allowance should be extended to married women. Help should also be provided to enable the carers to have one or two weeks' holiday by bringing someone else in to look after the elderly relative. That would give these people a break from the work they have to do.

One consequence of the Government's cutback on spending by local authorities has been the reduction in the personal social services. The people who have suffered most have been the elderly, through the meals-on-wheels and home help schemes. Those are the things which directors of social services find relatively easy to cut from their budgets when they are hard pressed. I am told that between 1979 and 1984 two thirds of local authorities had increased spending by less than the Association of Directors of Social Services regarded as necessary to maintain, not to improve, these basic services. Rate-capping will make the problem even worse. Too often the Government have tried to shift the blame for the reduction in personal social services on to the local authorities. We should make it clear in the House that we regard the Government as directly responsible for these cutbacks.

The elderly who live in rural areas—although I am not speaking exclusively about rural areas — are dependent on the transport provisions that we make for access to post offices, and so on. I believe that the Transport Bill, which is at present going through another place, will damage the interests of elderly people by making it more difficult for local authorities to provide the schemes necessary for effective support of transport for elderly people. For example, I believe that the cross-subsidy will be down from about £60 million to £20 million a year, and in any case it is designed to be phased out within five years.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that in my part of the country the elderly, and particularly the disabled, will be substantially helped by the Bill? Although many of them receive concessionary fares, they cannot make use of them either because there are no buses or because they are too disabled to board them. Under the new Bill, they will be able to use their coupons for taxis, and that will help enormously.

Mr. Steel: The hon. Lady is half right; but to say that because there are no buses in some areas we should introduce legislation that will mean even fewer buses in the future is to express a most extraordinary view. I think that the hon. Lady will join common cause with me in this view. I find that the various concessionary fare schemes suffer through lack of a national scheme of support which would enable elderly people to travel across boundaries between rail and buses. Old-age pensioners in my constituency, which is hard hit by that, have complained to me that in other parts of the country, notably in the London Transport area, pensioners have benefited greatly in past years from imaginative local schemes that have no cross-geographical reference. We know from the experience of British Rail, which found it convenient to introduce off-peak travel schemes for old people, that it is possible for a national scheme to be introduced.

I referred earlier to post offices. In rural areas people have to travel further because of the cutbacks and closures that are taking place. The combined effect of post office closures and the lack of transport facilities will adversely affect elderly people in rural communities.

In conclusion, it is important that we turn our attention, in the wake of the publication of the Green Paper, to the plight of the elderly in our communities. We should insist that during the debate in the weeks ahead the Government are more forthcoming about what is actually going to happen, so that at least, in the words of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), people know the worst and are not left with the vague, unfigured, unstructured debate into which they have been plunged by the publication of the Green Paper.

4.52 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"recognises the Government's achievement in increasing the value of the retirement pension and welcomes the Government's continued commitment to protect its value; congratulates the Government on carrying out a thorough review of the social security system; and endorses the aim of ensuring a coherent and soundly based benefit structure to meet the needs of pensioners and others.".

We welcome very much the opportunity for this debate, at an early stage, on the needs of elderly people and their relationship with the proposals that we have put forward in the social security review Green Paper. As a Government, we have shown by our actions that meeting the needs of elderly people is a major objective of our policies, whether in social security, social services, health, or the many other aspects of policy that affect people in retirement.

The Government's amendment begins by referring to what has been achieved. Especially against the background of what I took to be the rather grudging remarks of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), I want simply to remind the House of what has been achieved in the past five or six years. First and foremost, we have firmly and clearly not only fulfilled but more than fulfilled our pledge to protect the value of retirement pensions. They have risen by very nearly 84 per cent. in a period in which prices have risen by 77 per cent.—a clear real increase. What is more, that has been achieved at a time when the number of retirement pensioners has increased by some 700,000, so that we have protected the position not only of those pensioners whom, as it were, we inherited, but of the significantly larger number of pensioners arising from demographic factors in the past few years. Contrary to what many Opposition Members profess to believe, it is our achievement in providing for that additional number of pensioners and increasing the real value of benefits that accounts for the major part of the real increase in social security expenditure of over £8 billion that has taken place in the past five or six years.

At the same time, we have changed the method of uprating pensions so that pensioners have the assurance of increases based on the actual measured increase in prices instead of the vagaries and uncertainties of the forecast method that we inherited from the Labour Government. Not least, for pensioners generally, we have written the Christmas bonus into the law and prevented the recurrence of what happened twice under our predecessors when the Christmas bonus was not paid at all. But if those are our achievements on the broad front——

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): As the Minister is talking about how good the Government's record is on the Christmas bonus, would he like to refer to the commitment that I seem to recall the Conservatives making before 1979 to double the Christmas bonus? Will the Government actually do that?

Mr. Newton: I am unaware of any commitment that we made to double the Christmas bonus. Such challenges come oddly from an hon. Lady who was, as I recall, a member of the Administration at the time when, two years running, no Christmas bonus at all was paid. My answer to the hon. Lady, if I may lapse into the vernacular, is simply: what a nerve.

Let me turn from what I said about the generality of our achievements for pensioners to some of the more limited measures that we have taken, which I think have been recognised by some Opposition Members, not least the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). They have not been recognised as widely as they should be. Although they are not necessarily of benefit to pensioners generally, they have brought significant additional help to important groups of pensioners with particular needs.

For example, I remind the House that since May 1983 men over 60 who are sick, disabled or unemployed can qualify immediately for the higher long-term rate of supplementary benefit. Men over 60 who are not working no longer need to sign on as unemployed to be awarded national insurance credits. Let me remind the House also that the capital limit for supplementary benefit was raised to £3,000 in November 1983, and changes have also been made in the smaller capital limit for single payments—a significant additional help to those many pensioners who have modest savings and previously found themselves denied benefit.

Let me remind the House further that since November 1984 people who return to this country after the age of 70

have been able to qualify for the non-contributory over-80s retirement pension. Before that change was made they had to fulfil a 10-year residence test before their 80th birthday. At the moment before the other place is a Bill that provides for abolishing the married women's half test, with effect from December 1984, so that married women who were over 60 in April 1979 will be able to get any retirement pension earned by their own contributions even if they did not pay national insurance contributions for half their married life. That was a discriminatory measure, and we have been happy to propose that the House should remove it. In recent proposals brought by the Government to the House, we have made it clear that we intend to abolish the lower married women's rate of the over-80s pension, and pay everyone the full rate from November 1985.

Those are not proposals that affect every pensioner, but they are targeted on groups with particular needs, for which I think we are entitled to claim credit from the House and, indeed, from the country.

Perhaps most important of all is a point which the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale did not touch upon and which I do not expect to hear mentioned by the Opposition Front Bench. I refer to the Government's most important single achievement in relation to retirement pensions, which has nothing to do with the pension itself. Our achievement in dramatically reducing the rate of inflation has ensured that pensioners' benefits and savings reasonably maintain their value and purchasing power.

The air of scorn of some Members on the Opposition Front Bench does them very little credit. They should go out into the country and ask pensioners how they feel about the Government's achievements in reducing inflation and how much easier that makes their lives than they were when prices were rising at more than 20 per cent. per annum. The Opposition should talk to the grass roots.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I do not wish to cramp the Minister's style, but will he spend some time not just reviewing what he alleges to be the Government's achievements but telling the House what the Government intend to do? As a result of the "new Beveridge" that the Secretary of State has brought forward, how many pensioners will be better off and how many millions will be worse off?

Mr. Newton: I was about to come to the figures and the Green Paper, but lest the hon. Gentleman think that I am trying to fend him off I should say that the Government are proposing an important series of structural reforms.

The hon. Gentleman is one of the few people in the House who may already have appreciated the significance of adopting for income-related benefits a common base of income assessment and a co-ordinated set of rules, and its importance for rational social security planning and the use of resources throughout the country. The Government feel that it is right to concentrate first on those structural reforms because whatever resources are available in the social security system it will be impossible to ensure that they are effectively used if we do not have a structure capable of using them effectively. When the House has had an opportunity to come forward with proposals concerning this structure and the Government have produced final proposals, then will be the time to consider in detail how the resources should be applied within that structure. That is what will determine the figures which so interest the hon. Gentleman.

Within any structure, decisions have to be made from time to time about the level of resources. It would not be sensible to give the kind of figures requested by the hon. Gentleman in advance of the structure being settled. Only the figures for the actual benefit rates from April 1987 will properly allow the hon. Gentleman to make such calculations. It is sensible to get the structure right and then to decide what the resources are to be and how they are to be deployed within the structure.

Mr. Field: Did the Government follow that procedure when they discussed the reforms in private? Is the Minister saying that the proposals were approved by the Department, the Cabinet Committee and the Cabinet itself without the Secretary of State putting any figures to them at all? Was the Cabinet happy to see at some later stage how individual groups would be affected? If the Cabinet was not satisfied with a discussion on that basis, why should the House be satisfied now?

Mr. Newton: In the course of the social security review the Government have, of course, satisfied themselves that the structure proposed can be sustained at a cost that the country can afford.

Mr. Field *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I shall give way again in a moment. The hon. Gentleman might at least let me finish my answer to his general point.

The point that the hon. Gentleman has failed so far to take—and I should like to carry him with me on this—is that whether we have the proposed structure, the present structure or any other structure that people come up with, decisions have to be taken year by year about the resources to be applied within the social security system. That cannot escape any Government, and the Labour Government many times found themselves taking what they no doubt regarded as very difficult decisions for just those reasons.

Given that within any structure Governments have to take decisions about resources, and as it would plainly be absurd at this stage to try to settle benefit rates for April 1987, the important issue for the Government to put before the House and for the House and the country to consider is whether we are proposing a sensible structure within which the resources, whatever their level, can be sensibly deployed.

Mr. Field: Most of my constituents would be far happier with a scheme that is complicated and difficult to understand but which pays more money than with a Rolls-Royce scheme which pays only half the benefits, and I shall be happy to take that debate to the country. Is the Minister really saying that the Prime Minister approved the scheme without knowing how many millions of pensioners would be better or worse off?

Mr. Newton: I have already given my answer to the general question that the hon. Gentleman raised. As one or two of my hon. Friends have pointed out from a sedentary position, although I have the highest regard for the moderation with which the hon. Gentleman put his views in the House and for his knowledge of the social security system—which is greater than that of most of us — the views that he attributes to his constituents, whether accurately or not, are not views that I would expect him to endorse. If the hon. Gentleman, as one of the leading experts in the House on the social security

[Mr. Newton]

system, is saying that he is interested only in additional resources regardless of whether the system is capable of directing them effectively to people in need, frankly he does nothing but damage to his own credibility.

Mrs. Beckett *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I will give way this time, but much as I am enjoying the debate I shall have to resist the temptation to give way any more because many other Members wish to take part.

Mrs. Beckett: The Minister has said some very kind words about my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), but he does his own reputation no good by trying to sustain the argument that the amount of money that people receive matters less than the way in which the money is delivered. If he really believes that, his understanding of the social security system and those who draw on it is infinitely less than we had previously imagined. Is what the Minister has just said a statement of what the Government are offering — a streamlined system with less money? If so, that merely confirms our worst fears.

Mr. Newton: I had intended to respond with almost as many kind remarks about the hon. Lady as about her hon. Friend, but in the past 30 seconds or so she has forfeited the right to those kind words.

Mr. Field: Just answer the question.

Mr. Newton: Not only did I in no way suggest that the structure was more important to claimants or anyone else than the level of benefits, but I made it quite clear—I hope that I carry both hon. Members with me on this—that a social security system which is not capable of using any given quantity of resources to the best effect, targeted effectively on those in greatest need and with the greatest claim to support from the rest of the community, is not a satisfactory system. What is more, such a system would end up wasting some of whatever money was put into it.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will the Minister accept that the elderly have a strongly developed sense of fair play? If they can see exactly how they and others benefit from the social security structure, they will be very much happier than they are with the present complicated system.

Mr. Newton: I entirely accept that helpful intervention from my hon. Friend.

I should like to move from the Government's record, as indeed I was being urged to do by the hon. Member for Birkenhead, to the way in which the concern shown in that record is carried through into the objectives and proposals in the review.

It is significant that the inquiry into provision for retirement was the first of the reviews to be established. Our aim is to ensure a sound basis of social security on which pensioners can safely rely. Briefly, I shall set out the main review proposals.

First, the basic state pension remains the foundation of state provision. To use the phrase in the Green Paper, it is one of the twin pillars of our approach to social security and a vital part of the improved partnership between the state and the individual that were are creating. The Green Paper states:

"The Government remain entirely committed to this"—

the basic retirement pension—

"and will continue to ensure that it retains its value".

Pensioners, with other social security beneficiaries, will have two upratings in the 16 months from November 1985 to April 1987. This will be carried out on the historic basis, taking the latest practicable measure, so that each uprating will be on time.

On top of the assurance given on the basic retirement pension, we have made it clear that the rights of existing pensioners or anyone retiring before the end of the century will not be changed by the proposals on the state earnings-related pension scheme. All existing rights at the time of the change will be honoured in full. For men aged 40 or over, or women aged 35 or over, their SERPS rights will be enhanced as a firm additional basis for the individual, personal or occupational pensions that they be able to build up under the proposals.

Mr. Heffer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me that if people were living purely on the basic pension they could not manage to survive. They survive because they receive supplementary benefit, yet it is that benefit and the various benefits that go with it, such as the heating allowance, that the Government intend to affect. Can the Minister assure us that those people living on benefits will receive more, or is it the intention of the Government, as it appears to us, to muck about with benefits so that people living at that level will be far worse off?

Mr. Newton: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I come in a moment to the incomes support scheme—our proposed restructuring of supplementary benefit—to which I believe he was referring, and to the wider issue that he raised. I wish to complete my remarks about our proposals for additional pensions over and above the basic state retirement pension.

With the continuation of the state earnings-related pension scheme for men aged over 50 and women aged over 45 at the time of changeover, and the proposal for enhanced rights for men aged between 40 and 50 and women aged between 35 and 45, and for the protection of SERPS rights at the time of changeover for others, we have provided a firm basis on which people can build additional entitlement through the new arrangements that we propose to introduce for occupational pensions, whether in a firm or on an industrywide basis, or for personal pensions. It means that, for the first time, almost everyone in work will be able to build their own entitlements to their own pensions and will have a specific right to contributions from their employers towards that.

During the years in which those rights are building, they will represent a major social advance—removing the present "two nations" in pensions—and will be a major foundation for even greater independence and the possession of personal ownership rights in a way that has already been reflected in the powerful desire of people to own their homes. In some ways, this is a parallel development to home ownership, and I believe that it will come to be seen as a major social reform.

Mr. Frank Field: Since the Government have made it clear that the aim of the review is primarily to tackle poverty, could the Minister address his mind to the problems of poverty in old age? With regard to the proposal that people should not be in SERPS but should build private provision, does he expect fewer or more people to be poorer at the end of their working lives?

Mr. Newton: Our purpose is to achieve precisely what has been happening as a result of the growth in occupational pension schemes during the 1950s and 1960s, which almost came to a halt after the introduction of SERPS: it is to build a position in which everyone retiring shall not need to fall back on additional income-related provision. It would be a rash man who would forecast whether, under the existing structure or in the future, that aim will be achieved, but it is a major objective of our policy to ensure that everyone going into retirement does so with an income adequate — if possible, more than adequate—to sustain himself.

Mr. Field: If that is the aim, why are the Government setting the minimum provision at 4 per cent., when the private sector says that about three times that level will be needed to guarantee a pension that would achieve the Government's objective?

Mr. Newton: We thought it right to set the figure in the Green Paper at a level which balances two different considerations. The first is the one which the hon. Gentleman and I have just been discussing, and the general aim to ensure adequate incomes for pensioners in retirement. The other is that we must keep an eye on the effects on employers' costs and people's take-home pay. Therefore, it is a balance between the predictions that can be made about any given contribution level, and the impact today. Liberal Members did not deal with this point in their comments on the basic state retirement pension and their desire to increase it. We must balance those considerations against the bills that must be paid, whether by those providing employment or by those in employment. The 4 per cent. figure is very much a minimum, and it is entirely open to people to add to that provision on their own account, to negotiate with their employers for a larger employer's contribution, or to come to whatever arrangements they wish, provided that those minimum requirements are met. The minimum requirements were set because we also considered the employment and other factors that arise in the present world.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty, and Skye): Does the Minister believe that the minimum requirements are sufficient on their own?

Mr. Newton: Yes. We shall, of course, consult those concerned with providing pensions and annuities, and we shall listen to points made on this or any other issue arising from our proposals. The Green Paper is a consultative document. We have already started the process of consultation with those concerned, and we shall take note of what they tell us. But the hon. Gentleman should recognise that under our proposals the only group of people who will be entirely dependent on the 4 per cent. minimum contribution for their additional pensions will be those who, by most standards, although not perhaps by the hon. Gentleman's standards, are very young, that is to say, men under 40 or women under 35, who have a good while to go before retirement and, therefore, have a considerable time to build up their contributions.

All the groups above that age will either have their protected or enhanced SERPS rights as well or, in the case of men over 50 and women over 45, they will have their full SERPS pension. One reason we have cast our proposals as we have is that if this was all that was to be provided for people in those older age groups, it would not be possible to build up sufficient provision by the time of retirement. For that reason we have come forward with this proposed structure.

In conducting the review and putting forward our proposals in the Green Paper, we have borne in mind the needs of pensioners not only in relation to SERPS or the basic state retirement pension. Pensioners and many other people are at present partly dependent on supplementary benefit for their incomes, and they have faced great problems with the immense, sometimes mind-boggling, complexity of the existing supplementary benefits system.

Some of the figures are familiar to the House — the 16,000 paragraphs of instructions and the 40-page index. Indeed, there is now a third volume of the S manual. Within all those complicated instructions there is a multiplicity of different types of payment, which means that people are often uncertain about what their entitlement should be. There will be tremendous advantage, not least for pensioners, in our proposed move to a simpler, clearer income support structure within which it is easy to work out entitlement and understand it.

As the House knows, we are proposing a set of basic benefit rates incorporating premium rates for particular groups, including all pensioners over 60, lone parents and the long-term sick and disabled. A significant further move which I hope will help set at rest the mind of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), is that within the pensioner group we are proposing an additional premium rate for the over-80s. They are most likely to have additional needs arising from growing old age and additional frailty. As a result of the premium payment for all pensioners together with the additional premium payment for the over-80s, and given an additional premium for those between 60 and 80 for whom there is an indicator of additional need — for example, as measured by receipt of disablement benefits — in line with the premium for the sick and disabled, we have created a structure which is far simpler and far more likely to meet the general needs of pensioners than the one at present.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Is it reasonable to try to assess the amount of money to be allocated to these premiums by establishing what is now spent on heating additions, for example, under the existing supplementary benefits scheme so that they could be spread over all the premiums, or is that a completely cockeyed way of looking at it?

Mr. Newton: I am not quite sure what the hon. Gentleman is asking, but I think I can answer him by saying that we have made it clear that we are not looking for savings from our proposals for the main structure of supplementary benefit. Broadly, our intention is to put back into the simplified structure of rates, including the premia to which I have just referred, the money that is currently spent on various additional requirements. Principally they are heating additions, but also include diet additions, baths additions, laundry additions and a variety of other additional payments which are part of the complexity of the present system. However, in setting the premium rates we shall have regard to the existing distribution of additional requirements and expenditure of the kind to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I hope that

[Mr. Newton]

that answer follows the general lines of the one he wanted and that it is an indication of the way in which our minds have worked in coming forward with the proposals.

There are two other important points about the replacement proposals for the supplementary benefits scheme. First, with regard to the income support proposals, we are proposing a further, very important change in the capital rule which I believe will be widely welcomed by many pensioners. That is the introduction of a tapered rule running from £3,000 to £6,000 in place of the present £3,000 capital cut-off—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am glad to hear that endorsement from the Conservative Benches and also to acknowledge the nods from the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale and his hon. Friends. It is clear that they also welcome that move, just as it will be welcomed by many pensioners.

Secondly, the other half of the supplementary benefits replacement is that we are separating into the so-called social fund a number of the highly complex regulation arrangements which currently exist for meeting a variety of specific needs. These include the single payments arrangements, the urgent needs arrangements and, to a significant extent, those arrangements which are directed towards community care needs. We believe that these new arrangements will provide flexibility in dealing with the needs of special cases—their needs as whole people—which now prove extremely difficult in the detailed regulation system, particularly the detailed regulations for single payments.

Very much part of our thinking which has helped develop our ideas on the social fund is the belief that by operating with specially trained officers we can build on the experience which the Department has gathered since 1980 through the work of special case officers. We can also work more closely than has sometimes been the case in the past with those who are often concerned with the needs of the same claimants in local authority social services departments. That will enable us to build up policies which, for example, are much more effectively directed towards helping people who might need special help because they are coming out of institutions or hospitals and back into the community. It could be that they need special help, in conjunction with local authority social services departments, to ensure that they do not require institutional or hospital care.

Mr. Heffer: This sounds absolutely marvellous, but what are the limits in relation to the social fund? If there are clear cash limits, what happens if a number of people at a given moment have special needs but the limit is reached? Those of us who live with grass roots people —*[Interruption.]* Some of us do live with grass roots people, and many of them are our constituents. Can we have an assurance that, when there are genuine special needs, such people will receive benefit under the new system?

Mr. Newton: We intend that the social fund should operate within an annual budget. That will entail our making arrangements similar to those we make in health authority funding, where many of the same problems can arise. The budget will be allocated to local DHSS offices and the pattern of expenditure, priorities and the need to hold reserves at regional level will be assessed. Nothing that I have seen of existing social provision, where the concept of annual budgeting is part and parcel of annual operations, leads me to believe that we cannot devise effective arrangements for a flexible system which meets needs.

Alongside the simplified and, I believe, significantly improved structure of supplementary benefit which we are proposing we also propose a system of housing benefit which is much simpler, clearer and, we believe, more effective in meeting needs. In response to the hon. Member for Birkenhead, I said that for the first time the proposed income support system and the proposed revised housing benefit system will be based on the same assessment of income and in accordance with consistent rules. It is significant to pensioners and others that, for the first time, we shall have a system of housing benefit that deals even-handedly with those on income support and those who are not.

As the hon. Member for Birkenhead has obviously spotted, people on supplementary benefit have 100 per cent. of their housing costs reimbursed whereas those not in receipt of supplementary benefit but perhaps have only fractionally more income have only 60 per cent. of their housing costs met. That gives rise to the problems which have led to the extreme complication of housing benefit supplement. We are proposing equal treatment for people on the same income, whether it is derived from supplementary benefit or another source. That is a major gain in fairness and equity.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale will have realised that I cannot give figures that he wanted. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] I am not running away and will try to avoid the temptation of repeating everything that I have already said.

In addition to those common rules and the common basis for assessment of income for housing benefit and supplementary benefit, the premium rates for pensioners on the new income support scheme will carry through into housing benefit. They will become what are known as housing benefit needs allowances.

Everything I say about structural questions and the folly of attempting now to set benefit rates for April 1987 also applies to the calculation of housing benefit because that will be determined by the income support rates set in the replacement supplementary benefit system and by the rate of taper that we are proposing.

In any structural reform such as we are proposing there will be swings and roundabouts. Some people will gain and others will lose. We have made it clear that we intend to ensure that there are no cash losers in the change to the income support scheme. We have stated our anxiety to make effective transitional arrangements to protect those who need to be protected, as any reform is bound to affect entitlement. We shall consider the implications of the proposal, which I believe is right in principle, for everyone to pay about 20 per cent. of their rates. The proposal has widespread support on the Benches behind me and, I believe, elsewhere, as it will restore people's interest in what their elected councillors do. We have said several times that we shall give appropriate consideration to what is required in that regard as it affects people on supplementary benefit.

We intend to answer the question posed by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale. The proposal for payment of 20 per cent. or so of rates should apply to people on income support and to those who

receive only housing benefit and have no income support. I hope that our stance is clear. I cannot give the House an absolute guarantee that there will be no losers, because of the nature of the changes. I am giving an assurance that we shall have in mind what the right hon. Gentleman said when setting rates and establishing the transitional arrangements.

I have taken a lot of the House's time—fairly, I hope I can claim—responding to questions. I will leave it to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to wind up the debate and to comment on death grant. I should like to observe, however, that everyone gets only £30, which is of very little use and that it is unsatisfactory that only those on supplementary benefit receive full help with funeral costs. We are proposing that genuinely adequate help should be available to those who need help to meet funeral costs rather than only to those on an existing means-tested benefit. The right hon. Gentleman's proposal would not achieve that end. His proposed £250 for everybody would not be enough help for people with no means. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will reconsider his proposal.

The review's purposes are to meet the social conditions of today and those which we can foresee for the rest of the century, to create a simpler and fairer system so that people, not least pensioners, genuinely get the benefits to which they are entitled, and to create a soundly based system that can deliver the promises it makes. Nobody has a greater interest in our achieving those objectives than pensioners, and we mean to see that they are secured.

5.40 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): It is right that the first aspect of the Green Paper should be the proposals that affect the elderly, because, leaving aside the rhetoric, the Government's attitude to pensions most clearly reveals the twin purposes of their reviews. First, there is the obsession with cutting public expenditure for the sake of cutting, or, perhaps, for the sake of the few individuals —the better off—who alone have reaped the benefit of the cuts. Secondly, there is the obsession with destroying public services—financial or otherwise—simply because they are public services.

The most significant change that the Green Paper has proposed is the phasing out of the state earnings-related pension scheme. The more we consider the matter, the more extraordinary this decision seems. Already it appears that contributors to the scheme — the few who are allowed to stay in SERPS—will, at best, pay slightly more without receiving improved benefits. The vast majority of people will pay substantially more and receive substantially less, especially as those in occupational schemes will lose the state's hedge against inflation and the standards against which those schemes have been measured.

We have yet to learn the costs of abolition in terms of tax concessions on the compulsory private pensions with which the Government plan to replace SERPS, although there seems every likelihood that they will run to several thousand million pounds. We are aware that the Government have argued during and before this debate that massive and unforeseen changes have made the abolition of SERPS necessary. The Government have not explained at all—never mind to our satisfaction—why these changes were not understood, not only in 1975, as the Government now suggest, but in 1981 when the bulk of the statistics on which this policy is based were published. The Government have not explained why the conclusions were not understood in 1983 when the Prime Minister gave one of her famous assurances or even in 1984 when the Secretary of State gave his assurance. The statistics for pensioners and for the contributory population that are used now are almost identical in every respect to those that were used years ago.

What happened between the assurance in 1984 by the Secretary of State and June 1985 to bring about this massive change in understanding and in policy? It is not that there has been a massive change in the anticipated number of pensioners or in the ratio of contributors to non-contributors. The Secretary of State produced a half-baked, half-thought-out plan, justified by reference to a misinterpreted opinion poll, for what he called "personal portable pensions." That is not even easy to say. It was a plan not just for privatising, but for individualising pensions. The trouble with the plan was that, the more people looked at it, the more they pointed out that no one in his right mind would buy the right hon. Gentleman's portable pension when he could get a much better deal from the existing state scheme. Full transferability, guarantees against inflation and a pension with a decent maturity period were all provided in the state pension scheme. That scheme was a much better bet than any private scheme. One after another individuals and the institutions that advised the Secretary of State published articles or wrote privately pointing out to the right hon. Gentleman that no one would buy a personal portable pension unless the Secretary of State first abolished the superior state scheme.

We all realise to our cost that telling the Prime Minister that the state is doing something better than the private sector—that the administrative costs are lower so that the state scheme gets even better value for money than the private sector—is like a red rag to a bull. The Prime Minister knows what she believes and she does not want to be confused with the facts. She knows that anything that the state provides must be bad—that it must be worse than the private sector. If, by some chance, the state scheme is better than the private sector scheme, her motto is "Get rid of it quickly before anyone finds out."

Because the Government must acknowledge that they are replacing a good pension scheme with a worse one at a higher cost, it has been necessary to preach doom and gloom about how SERPS has not really been a good scheme because it has been so wickedly over-generous to pensioners. We have heard before, and no doubt shall hear again, reservations about the necessity for and the wisdom of the Government's proposals — whether it is the example of the Phillips committee howlers in 1954 or the Government's own Social Security Advisory Committee's devastating criticisms a year or so ago.

Even leaving aside all the other questions about the accuracy or truthfulness of the Government's claims about the problems with SERPS, one major issue remains. The Government Actuary points out, and is quoted as saying in the background paper to the reviews, that the possible rise in contributions that he identifies will occur at the level given only if the link between pension upratings and earnings is restored — the link that this Government abolished in 1980 and that they have always refused to restore. While the basic pension remains linked only to prices, its value over the years will be so eroded that, even

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

if the Government do not lay a finger on SERPS, eventually the total pension will be sufficient to equate only to the value of the pension today.

Those who have no entitlement to SERPS because they have not yet found a job, or those who are not wanted by the private insurance companies because they are on the dole or sick, will remain heavily or totally reliant upon the basic pension and will end up completely reliant on whatever scheme replaces supplementary benefit by the end of the century or later. Even on the Government's own predictions before they decided to abolish SERPS, at the end of the century there will still be a million pensioners on supplementary benefit. I shall not bother to ask the Minister how many more he thinks there will be if the Government abolish SERPS, because I do not suppose that he can tell us that either.

Apart from the value of the pension itself, the Government's argument that we cannot afford to let SERPS continue has been severely damaged. If the Government continue to link the basic pension only to prices, the contributions will ultimately reach not even the predicted 20 per cent.—the figure that the Government love to cite—but

"less than half of that",

in the Government Actuary's words. We can forget all the weeping and gnashing of teeth about the cost of SERPS. The Government did a demolition job on SERPS five years ago, in 1980, and it is totally gratuitous for them to return to it now.

That is not the point of this proposal. The point is that SERPS, plus an eroded basic pension, is still better than a private pension plus an eroded basic pension, and that is why SERPS has to go.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) asked the Minister whether he could give an assurance —wisely, the Minister was not drawn on that point— that the personal portable pension, or whatever the new plan is, will give as good a pension provision as or better than SERPS would have provided. The Minister knows that the answer is, "No, it will not." The Government, in their consultative document, specifically ruled out giving any guarantees on the value of personal portable pensions. Indeed, they said that anyone who took out such a pension could not rely upon any fallback or guarantee from the state—presumably, other than supplementary benefit or the basic pension—because that person would be taking an individual risk and would be out on his own. If the new scheme is as good as or better than SERPS, there would be no need for the Government to warn the people whom they wished to remove from those pensions that the Government would not pick up the pieces.

The Minister said a good deal about the Government's record and how grateful pensioners are. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has tried recently asking pensioners how grateful they are. He is fond of pointing out the dangers of inflation. We all recognise that inflation has undesirable consequences, but under the Labour Government the real value of the pension increased by 20 per cent. It seems to be difficult for Conservative Members to grasp that simple fact. Despite the problems that we faced, we managed to help those drawing the pension then and, by establishing the scheme that the Government attack in these reviews, to provide for the pensioners of the future. This Government are attacking both.

Mr. Newton: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Lady, but, in view of her remarks, I must ask whether she would care to comment on the adjustment in 1976 to the uprating method, which did not take account of several months of rapidly rising inflation and cut what in today's money would be at least £1 billion from the amount that pensioners would otherwise have received. I remind the Liberals, since they introduced this debate, that the Lib-Lab pact was made the following year.

Mrs. Beckett: Whatever may be the criticisms of the record of the Labour Government, we still improved pensions in real terms by 20 per cent., which is more than the present Government have managed to do.

I remind the Minister of another simple fact which I have drawn to his attention on other occasions. In our whole period of office, we had only as much from the North sea in terms of income as the Government have received every month throughout their period of office. Even with our problems, we managed to increase the real value of the pension by 20 per cent., so perhaps we should hear rather less about how great the Government's record has been. The first thing that the Government did was to erode the basis of the improvement, the link with earnings, although they still paid lip-service to their concern for the elderly.

Although SERPS is most significant in the sense of revealing the purpose of the reviews, neither the proposals on SERPS nor the reviews themselves represent the whole of the attack on the elderly that we have seen in recent years. I am not even referring to what the Minister said about changing uprating. He knows that his Government have saved money by changing the basis of uprating. They have saved money on three occasions by postponing by a week or two the payment of pensions. They have saved money by reducing heating allowances.

Most of all, the Government have saved money on pensioners by the massive cuts in housing benefit. I might have said more about the cuts that we have already seen — and predicted — in housing benefit, except that previous debates have shown that there is very little point in asking Ministers to give us more indications of who will be affected and to what extent. We know that the Government have the figures but do not intend to reveal them to us. As they are, according to the Minister, so good, it is surprising that we have not been told about them. The Government are not usually reluctant to claim credit for being generous to the populace. As I have said, we know that there will be cuts in housing benefit, and we strongly suspect that occupational pensioners in particular will be the sufferers.

The most vulnerable among the elderly have been consistently among the hardest hit. The leader of the Liberal party referred to the forced increases in water rate which are being brought about by the Government. They follow hard on the heels of a series of forced increases in fuel costs, which have fallen particularly hard on pensioners. The pensioners who are poor enough now to be drawing supplementary benefit are precisely those pensioners who often fall foul of the system of single payments to which the Minister referred.

A wide range of problems which affect everyone who is poor bear even more harshly on the elderly. I have recently received some communication from chiropodists —I hope that Minister will be able to comment on it later — about the hardships caused to pensioners in

regard to single payments, and the wholly inadequate grants which are received—if, indeed, they are received at all. Some people have too many deformities of the feet to wear ordinary shoes but are not sufficiently severely affected to justify the wearing of surgical shoes. Many pensioners find that, if they can get assistance, it is wholly inadequate to meet the cost which they have to bear. In that context, as in many others, it was pointed out to me very forcefully that the cost to the state of chiropody charges and the cost to individuals in pain and discomfort greatly outweighs the cost of a more sensible system.

Although the Minister spoke with touching confidence in his new proposals for a social fund, which he seems to think will be better than the single payment system, the Opposition have even more worries and concern about his proposals than we have about the existing scheme—and, heaven knows, that is saying something.

The leader of the Liberal party referred to problems connected with the death grant, and I am aware that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will be replying on that point. When the Secretary of State for Social Services made his recent statement, my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) referred to people having to have a pauper's funeral. Conservative Members sought to discount what my hon. Friend said. If they do not like that term, they may be more touched by the term "parish funeral." In the folklore of our parents and grandparents, that was always something devoutly to be avoided. To be buried by the parish was regarded as a great stigma and source of shame. The more I hear about the Minister's proposals for a social fund, the more it seems to me that they will result in the reintroduction of the stigma.

I was entirely unconvinced when I heard the Secretary of State say that the lack of an appeal process will not fall foul of the European Court. I noticed that the Secretary of State was prepared to put the blame on the Minister for Social Security if that did not turn out to be the case.

We are also concerned about the staff at the DHSS. I am not sure whether they will retire early, die of heart attacks, have nervous breakdowns, be murdered or lynched, but I am sure that there will be a substantial increase in the turnover of DHSS managers.

Mr. Newton: The entire basis of the scheme was largely discretionary until it was put into regulations in 1980. The notion that a modest return to discretion, in an area in which regulations have not worked very well, will defeat a system which operated largely on the basis of discretion for so many years cannot be supported.

With regard to death grant, the terms "pauper's funeral" and "parish funeral" refer to something which can still, in theory, exist—burial by the local authority. The local authority still has that duty in certain cases. In my experience, supplementary benefit single payments are not seen as being the same as a pauper's funeral. The hon. Lady is drawing a misleading and wrong parallel in suggesting that they are the same.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It would be better if, instead of having ministerial interventions, particular points were dealt with in the reply at the end of the debate.

Mrs. Beckett: The elderly are also severely affected by the changes in the provisions concerning board and lodging. The elderly are affected, as are other groups, by the ceilings imposed on board and lodging. If the lodging in which the elderly have been staying has charges above the ceiling, or if there is a wish to increase the charges, which would take them above the ceiling, that is a matter of considerable concern to them. Assurances were given that such matters would be looked at.

A particular problem which has been drawn to my attention recently, affects handicapped people who are just under 65 and eligible to have varying sums paid to their account, the maximum being £198, because they are under 65. It is my understanding that on the day people become 65—if it happens to be more than a year since the regulations became law—they are now eligible for a payment of only £138·60. That is a reduction of £60 in the payment which can be made. I am told that that has already begun to happen to people in nursing homes. Indeed, I have a case—I shall pass it on to the Minister—of a home in which two or three such people are already affected. Obviously, it is a very serious matter, not only for the homes which are trying to provide proper nursing care but for the individuals who are affected. I find it hard to believe that even this Government intended that there should be such appalling side effects.

There are also the problems which arise where margins in homes for the elderly are cut to the bone. There is a fear that it may be necessary to reduce the level of provision of the very services that the Government have asked them to provide under the code of practice, such as proper training for staff and proper care for residents.

I understand that there are considerable differences of opinion arising between local offices as to who is to decide whether the level of fees is appropriate for the area concerned, although I recognise that the whole intention was to take some of the discretion away from local offices. In some areas, it is being said that payment above the ceiling can be made for a substantial period, while in others it is being said that the new figures must be implemented immediately. I hope the Minister will look into the question of how much discretion is being permitted.

Our main concern in the debate is the overall problems faced by the elderly of today. They include those who struggled to bring up their families before the introduction of the welfare state, the men—all too few—who fought in one or perhaps two world wars, and all too many of their widows. They include those who worked and struggled to establish a better society and who hoped to crown the victory that we commemorated this year with a society dedicated, for the first time in our history, to the principle of from each according to his or her ability and to each according to his or her needs—in other words, the principle of the welfare state.

It is a tragedy that, towards the end of their lives, they should be seeing a Tory Government who are not only trying to undo everything that most of them worked for but are making it plain, by their attitude to the pensioners of the future as well as to those of today, that they reject that fundamental principle of the welfare state.

It is still among the most elderly that the greatest reluctance exists to claim the benefits to which they are rightfully entitled—even benefits for which they and their families have paid—because they feel the stigma of charity, not rights, hanging even over the welfare state.

I must tell the Minister frankly that, in my opinion, the real meaning of the reviews, for the elderly and for everybody affected by them, is that, whatever the

[Mrs. Beckett]

Government may say, their desire is to reintroduce that stigma. They may not use those words, but that is what their words mean.

Not long ago a comedy show ran on television for almost as long as the present Government have run. It was called, "Never mind the quality, feel the width." The proposals that we are debating today are, unfortunately, as poor in quality as we fear they will be narrow in generosity.

6.2 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): Today's debate is concerned with the problems of the elderly. In my constituency, the elderly deeply resent being referred to only in relation to their problems. Indeed, some may feel that an advantage of televising the debates in another place is that all can see the contribution to public life that is made by many over retirement age. Most pensioners are fit and able to assist their families. More importantly, they are able to make an enormous contribution, in voluntary organisations and other types of service, to the community.

When talking to pensioners today one discovers that income maintenance is not their greatest fear, though it is understandable that the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) should have referred to income. After all, at the time of the Lib-Lab pact, with inflation running at more than 25 per cent., many pensioners were afraid that they would not have sufficient income to see out their lives.

In fact, pensions have kept up with the cost of living, and during the past 30 years there has been a substantial shift in resources in favour of pensioners. The result is that today many pensioners are better off per head than the households of those in work.

Pensioners are worried mainly by the fear of isolation and alienation. It is clear from recent census returns that many more elderly now live alone. With people living much longer, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of over-80s, and these are causes for concern.

In recent years, under Conservative rule, there has been a 15 per cent. increase in resources devoted to the personal social services, a 20 per cent. increase in real terms in expenditure on the health services and there are more nurses, district nurses, doctors, health visitors and so on. All of that has made for a great improvement in assisting the elderly. More important than even those services is the way in which they are used, and there have been many initiatives in care in the community, with people being brought into voluntary organisations so that the elderly can be helped to live at home.

I am vice-chairman of the National Council for Carers and their Elderly Dependants, an organisation with approaching 50 branches throughout the country, helping informal carers such as those to whom the leader of the Liberal party rightly referred. These people selflessly look after those who, wherever possible, can live at home. The Department has given assistance to the NCCED and incorporated them in plans and initiatives. There are, however, many other groups in the community helping to make the elderly feel valued and important. They include the WRVS and Age Concern, whose members know a great deal about training and the needs of the elderly.

Last week I visited some housing developments for the elderly in my constituency. I saw with pride the great variety of provision that is being made, including sheltered housing, cluster housing and good neighbour schemes. I was made aware of the way in which developments are embracing some of the new technologies. For example, it is possible to have a radio link with a headquarters so that those in difficulty can call for help.

It is all too easy to polarise provision and only to consider whether it is provided by the state or the private sector. The provision of old people's homes has been a controversial area, and I welcome the new regulations for the registration of homes for the elderly. Over the years there have been many articles and research projects highlighting the treatment of people in homes for the elderly. Recent research at the university of Bath made it clear that under the new procedures many such homes in the state sector would have difficulty getting registered and becoming approved as private homes.

Recent events in Southwark at the Nye Bevan home have provided a particularly appalling example of what can happen under local authority provision. We need a partnership and balance between private, voluntary and local authority homes, and it is wrong to suggest that there is some type of hierarchy.

The elderly want to feel acknowledged and valued members of the community. They want the Government to sustain their policies for the Health Service, making sure that patient care is given priority and that the resources available are used effectively. They want to see the social services maintained and, where possible, improved. They want support for informal carers, for all those who voluntarily, giving their own time, help others. Above all, they want flexibility and choice so that they may have dignity in their old age, making a contribution to the community while in their active years of retirement, then being supported with the help they need on becoming more frail towards the end of their lives.

6.8 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): It is customary to comment on points made by the previous speaker. I hope that the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) will forgive me if I do not do that on this occasion, though I confess that if I were a Conservative Member speaking in this debate, following the announcement of a major review of the welfare state, I should have made a contribution similar to hers. It was clever in the way it distracted attention from some of the immediate plans of the Government.

I shall refer to some matters that were raised by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) and my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), the first being to question how the Secretary of State was able to boast that his review of the welfare state, which will result in another Beveridge, could be presented to Parliament without one figure to show how individual groups of claimants would be affected.

The Minister of State answered that question today by saying that the Government were concerned with the structure of benefits and that once the consultation period was over the figures would be provided. I have a suggestion which puts a different light on what is really going on. We have read much in the press about the success of the Secretary of State and his team in fighting

off Treasury attacks on the welfare state. Is it possible that it was a clever ploy by the Secretary of State to make his statement on Monday without giving any figures? Is it possible that that was part of a deal that he had to strike with the Chancellor of the Exchequer? Is it possible that the efforts of the Treasury to cut welfare provision will continue as we embark on this year's review of public expenditure?

Has all that resulted in Ministers at the Department of Health and Social Security being forced to talk only about the structure, when hon. Members in all parts of the House want information about the rates of benefit so that we can work out who among our constituents will be better off and how many thousands among them will be worse off?

The Minister's clever ploy was no mere accident. He was pushed into it. It takes more than nerve for the DHSS team to come to the House and behave in this way because only a few weeks ago the Secretary of State and the Minister of State savaged my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) for presenting proposals which he had not fully costed. We were told that it was outrageous, irresponsible and typical of the Labour party. Today the Government propose a major overhaul without providing a single figure.

Perhaps the Minister can say whether my analysis is correct. I do not wish to score points, but if I am right and the Treasury is still after cuts of £2 billion or £4 billion the support of Government Back Benchers will be needed to fend off an attack. Ministers must not take pleasure in mystifying themselves and their own Back Benchers about what they are up to.

The state earnings-related pensions scheme is to be abolished. That will mean a worse deal for women and for low-paid workers. Despite the Minister of State's debating skills, when asked whether the alternative will be superior in terms of tackling poverty he was reticent. The private sector says that if workers are to build up contributions over their lifetime to afford a pension which will prevent them from being in need in old age, contributions must be between 12 and 14 per cent. of their earnings. The Government are talking about contributions of 4 per cent. SERPS is to be abolished, but the alternative will not achieve the Government's objective of taking people off means tests and making fewer people less dependent on state support.

The Government are loose in their use of language. Certain phrases appeal to their Back Benchers and many people in the country. They say that we must target resources to those in greatest need. That is a good phrase, but let us examine what the Government are doing—although that is difficult since we have no figures.

Let us examine the simplification involved in replacing the supplementary benefit scheme with the income support scheme. The Government intend to simplify the scheme by abolishing all the additions to basic benefit which are currently given for heating, diet and special laundry needs. According to Government language, there could not be better targeting than that because the extra allowances are given only if a dietary, heating or laundry need can be shown.

The Government's alternative is a premium that will apply to everyone at present in that category. The jam which was spread less thickly amongst those in greatest need is to be spread more thinly amongst all people in that category. Even without the figures, we can see that some of the Government's objectives will not be achieved.

I hope that two clear messages result from the debate today. One reason why the Goverment have not provided any figures in connection with this major overhaul of the welfare state is that the struggle about the level of welfare support is continuing between the DHSS and the Treasury. Once that dispute is settled and the figures are available we shall know the extent of the cuts. Whenever hon. Members ask how many people will be better off and how many millions will be worse off, Ministers will not reply with a straight answer. It is right for the leader of the Liberal party to sound a note of worry that millions will be worse off as a result of the review, although we may not be able to put exact numbers on it until later in the year.

SERPS has faults and the Government are correct to say that we have a problem with an aging population which is increasing relatively faster than our working population. Despite those problems, the Government are abolishing SERPS which is the only method on the statute book which guarantees bridging the link between poverty and old age for most people. The Government's alternative will not achieve that. There will be many more poor pensioners in the future. I hope that the messages are received loud and clear in the country.

6.16 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): If I were a Labour Member — I hope that I never shall be — I should probably make a speech similar to that made by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) if I understood the subject as he does, but I shall not follow his line. I want to explore the wider issue discussed by the leader of the Liberal party.

The debate has tended, like so many others, to focus on money. The hon. Member for Birkenhead concentrated on money. He is an expert on such matters, but money indicates something about attitudes. The extent of Government expenditure on the elderly tells us something about the Government's attitude.

Last year £6·5 billion, or 40 per cent. of the Health Service budget, was spent on the elderly. Does that mean that the Government care about the elderly? Would the Opposition say that the Government were more caring if they spent 50 per cent. of the budget on the elderly? What is the cut-off point or the starting point of caring?

Hon. Members on both sides of the House are caring, and even if we spent a few more billion pounds it would not mean that we were more caring. The Labour party thinks that it has a monopoly of caring. It has a habit of championing minority groups such as the elderly, the handicapped and the disadvantaged. Anyone who is not quite up to the next man is labelled "disadvantaged" and immediately attracts the Labour party's interest.

Today the Liberal party is trying to upstage the Labour party by arguing that it can do even better for the elderly than the Labour party and that it cares even more. No party has a monopoly of caring. The test of who cares most is not decided by who spends most. The elderly must have opportunities for maintaining good health and human dignity. The dignity of the elderly is most important.

Society in various parts of the world views its elderly in many different ways. In the east the elderly are still revered as the heads of the family. In developing countries the elderly play a full part in family life. In many European countries they continue to head the family business. The elderly have the status of experience, wisdom and prudence.

[Mr. Anthony Steen]

In Britain, the elderly and their problems are seen as something with which the state must deal—it is not for the family to look after the elderly, but for the Government. The trade union movement continues to fight to lower the retirement age, but unwittingly it is compounding the problem. There is an ever-growing number of retired and elderly people. The term "elderly" tends to be synonymous with being retired from paid work.

Old age begins in Britain when one becomes a pensioner, and pensioners are becoming pensioners as early as 50. They switch from being part of society to being an adjunct to society. It is rather like Cinderella. One day one is in a job and the next day one is old—someone who attends Christmas parties and wears funny hats.

Rather than being revered, our elderly tend to be patronised. They receive concessions for travel and special prices at cinemas. Yet the major problem is life expectancy, which is increasing in leaps and bounds. We are spending £17·4 billion a year on health care and as a result it has improved dramatically. Whereas in 1985 there were about 3·5 million people over the age of 75, by the year 2050 there will be nearly double that number—6 million people. Whereas this year just over 500,000 people are more than 85, by 2050 there will be nearly 2 million—three times as many. That is one aspect that has not been mentioned in the debate. We must consider the scale of the problem and the increased life expectancy of society. We therefore have the prospect of increasing numbers of people spending a quarter of a century or more of their lives as pensioners.

There are two problems. First, where will all those retired people live for a quarter of a century of their lives? Secondly, what will they do with their time? What will they do day after day when they are retired and have nothing to do? A large majority of retired people will continue to live in their own homes—whether owned or rented. However, there will be an increasing need to build special-purpose bungalows and warden-controlled complexes, and that entails an increase in public expenditure.

There has been a growth in the number of residential homes. In 1982-83, expenditure on the care of the elderly in residential homes rose from £39 million to £102 million. Expenditure for last year is estimated at £190 million. While private homes provide better value and lower costs than local authority homes—*[Interruption.]* Oh yes they do. I do not know why Opposition Members are making a noise. They know that what I am saying is absolutely right. Private homes provide very much better value than local authority homes. I shall not bore the House with statistics, but I have them to hand, as does my hon. Friend the Minister. Although private homes provide better value than local authority homes, the cost of keeping the elderly in private homes rose from £39 million in 1982-83 to £190 million this year.

There is a further advantage: caring for the elderly in private homes entails half the cost of keeping an elderly person in a geriatric bed in a hospital, the current cost for which is £243 a week. As the population lives longer, the burden and the cost on the state will continue to increase——

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): What burden?

Mr. Steen: It is a very real burden on the state. The state will not refuse to accept that burden, but it is a burden.

I am sure that Opposition Members will agree that the one way in which the Government can endorse their family policy is to encourage more people to look after their own. I have never understood why the Government do not give some benefit and tax relief to those devoted people who look after their elderly and frail parents. They dedicate their lives to looking after their families. And it need not be only parents; it could apply to uncles and aunts. It is a better way for retired people to live, and would not be a strain on the state. Yet the Government continue to refuse to give tax relief to those looking after their families.

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Gentleman is making a comment that Opposition Members often make. The reason why the Government do not provide such help is simple: they seem to be quite incapable of distinguishing between cutting public expenditure and getting value for money.

Mr. Steen: I should have expected a helpful remark like that from the hon. Lady, and I am sorry that I gave way.

Not only will the Government save money by giving tax benefits to those who look after their own, but it is far better that the elderly should live with their families. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say something about that when he replies.

Money and housing appear to be the nitty-gritty of the problem facing the elderly, but I believe that there is a more sinister problem—loneliness. The House has not addressed that point in the debate. The problem of loneliness will eclipse all other problems as the elderly live longer. They need a purpose in life. I have met few who are ecstatic at the prospect of retirement, especially early retirement. They see little future in their lives, there is little prospect of paid work to augment their pensions and they have few opportunities to do something in society. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for what he said about voluntary work.

Loneliness is one of the worst and most intangible conditions of our time, especially for the retired living in our large urban areas. What are they supposed to do for a quarter of a century? They cannot travel on a bus with their concessionary fares all the time; they cannot play bridge or visit the museums or eat at luncheon clubs all the time. What are they supposed to do other than watch television and wait for a knock on the door? The Government need to help them find a new purpose, a new role and a new aim. People will be increasingly out of paid work at a younger and younger age.

We have a vast and increasingly fit army of young retired people who have a wealth of experience, knowledge and skills. We have to find a task and a purpose for them. There is a tremendous waste of resources. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Birkenhead appears to be either anxious to leave the Chamber or in some discomfort. Although he is very good at juggling with statistics, he overlooks the importance of the humane aspect of caring for the elderly. It is all about the real problems of living, rather than simply playing around with statistics and money. It is the problems of loneliness, caring and having a part to play in society. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will understand that——

Mr. Frank Field: The hon. Gentleman appears to be advocating a charter for busybodies.

Mr. Steen: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but this evening we are airing the grievances and problems of the elderly. We must tackle those.

I asked what an elderly person would do for a quarter of a century. He cannot travel on a bus the whole time, or watch television the whole time. What is he supposed to do?

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend accept that the Government's plans for a flexible decade of retirement would go some way towards meeting my hon. Friend's point?

Mr. Steen: Yes. My hon. Friend always puts her finger on it. I am glad she is joining in the debate.

We have debated many matters this evening, and I hope that I have made a short but helpful contribution. It was right for the leader of the Liberal party to raise the problems of the elderly. I regret that so few Opposition Members feel that this is a topic of such importance that they wish to join the debate. I am glad that a few members of the Liberal party, though only a few, are present and also that a few members of the Social Democratic party are here. I am pleased that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have spoken in the debate. I support the Government amendment. We are on the right path towards helping the lonely and the elderly.

6.31 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I am sure that the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) will be pleased to hear that I intend to put the other side of the coin. I do not know why he regards six Back Benchers of his own party as a large number. If he does, he is innumerate or is exaggerating. I do not accept that if people do not pay rates directly through their rates bill they are not contributing to rates income. I fear a cop-out by industry if it regards rates as being paid simply by ratepayers. Every customer and employee of a company pays its rates. The Confederation of British Industry recognises that fact and has pointed out to its employers and customers that high rates affect viability. It wishes to alter that position.

The social security reviews are defective because they do not tackle linkages. Although I agree with the hon. Member for South Hams that a case can be made for extra expenditure upon the social services or social security, there are many other problems that can be tackled without spending extra money. Normally they can be dealt with by linkages. Some houses are under-occupied and could be used by families. They remain under-occupied because there is insufficient sheltered housing for single people. It is a waste of resources which the single elderly deplore. The clearance of inner city areas has contributed towards the huge escalation in costs. The small, old houses that people prefer to live in have been demolished. Clearances are still taking place and ought to be stopped.

If elderly people wish to remain in their own homes, an adequate attendance allowance might make it unnecessary for them to enter institutional care. An attendance allowance would be far cheaper than institutional care. The social services have a part to play by providing day centres which enable the elderly to be fed properly. The voluntary sector can help. The community transport project takes people to the day centres. The National Health Service can also play its part by providing community nursing. If all these services were pulled together, better and cheaper care would be provided for individual needs. The social security reviews have failed to deal with the problem in that way. They have simply shifted money around from one needy pocket to another.

6.34 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): This has been a very useful and worthwhile choice of subject, particularly since the social security reviews were published this week. The alliance has chosen the problems of the elderly as one of the first subjects to be debated. This is the first opportunity to scratch the surface of the debate that will take place between now and the publication of the White Paper.

I appreciate the lengths to which the Minister for Social Security went to listen to the views which were expressed and then, with great skill, to skirt around the answers that were sought. The Minister should not rest too much upon this Government's apparent laurels. My most enduring impression of the day when the reviews were published was not of the Secretary of State for Social Services being given a characteristically easy time because of the hysterical reaction of the Opposition Front Bench spokesman. It was of several pensioners marching outside carrying placards saying, "Pensioners say 'No' to Fowler".

When he opened the debate, my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party rightly criticised the lack of figures. The lack of figures in the published volumes compounds the error that was pointed to by many people at the time of the reviews: that they were being conducted on a revenue-neutral basis, which meant that examination of the hidden welfare state provided by tax benefits would be precluded. Therefore, it is difficult to make constructive comments about the suggestions. The Minister for Social Security engaged in an almost theological discussion about the relationship between the financial aspect and the structure at which we should aim. He seemed to be trying to make a virtue out of a vice. At least, he said that the absence of vice in itself constituted a virtue. The Minister claimed that the absence of damning figures about who would lose and at whose expense some gains would be made was to be welcomed. It is rather like the words of the old song:

"I've danced with a man, who's danced with a girl, who's danced with the Prince of Wales."

Nobody has seen the culprit but everybody has passed by at some point. The review figures seem to have passed through several hands, but they are not available when we want to debate them.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) made a similar point. He pointed out that the Government actuaries have been both for and against SERPS. My right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party said that we could not back the Government's course of action over SERPS because of the way they have gone about it. SERPS was set up after all-party consultation. If it is to be restructured, modified or done away with completely, it should take place only after there has been all-party discussion. We also oppose its modification because there is to be no major increase in the basic flat rate pension. Most people accept that this would be an important counter-balance if there were to be any change in SERPS.

[Mr. Charles Kennedy]

Finance is one of the great defects of the social security reviews. The social fund will be a major contributor to the view that the public form about the reviews. There is interaction in the social fund between the benefits system and the personal social services. It will be cash limited. A system of discretionary grants and loans will be operated. The Secretary of State for Social Services wants the social fund to be used as a pump-priming mechanism in order to move people through the care in the community programme. This demonstrates that the Government tacitly acknowledge that the amount of money available to help the elderly through the care in the community programme is insufficient, that it is being damaged by the rate capping proposals of the Department of the Environment and that the joint funding arrangements are unsatisfactory because of the tapering financial arrangement and the relationship between the health authorities and the local authorities on account of the local authorities having to shoulder more of the burden. The Government are trying to find an additional source of money to help to prop up joint funding and the financing of the care in the community programme. That highlights the difficulties in funding and the fact that there will be an even greater drain on the social fund, which will be under great pressure.

The hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) spoke about the role of the voluntary organisations. As my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party has said, it is important to remember that much can be done. The voluntary organisations have a great role to play. However, as the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West knows through her patronage of the National Council for Carers and their Elderly Dependants, the role that can be played is threatened and made more difficult by the financial pressure under which the statutory sector now has to operate. Directors of social services who are faced with difficult choices are more likely to reduce or contract in the voluntary rather than in the statutory sector.

The other points that have come out of the debate are closely linked to what have been described by the Liberal leader as the "pessimistic assumptions" underlying the entire report. In an interview in the *Daily Telegraph* towards the end of last year, the Leader of the House said that he thought that there was great room for increasing employment in the front-line caring services. Instead of considering further cuts in the social services network, we should be trying to create jobs in that area. Indeed, during the last election campaign, the alliance suggested that 100,000 jobs could be created within the front-line caring services.

As has been pointed out, more needs to be done to locate, recognise, and then introduce mechanisms of support for those who care for others on an unrecognised and informal basis. The welfare state may be in difficulties now, but it would be in a state of total collapse and disorder without their contribution. The extension of the invalid care allowance to married women is another area in which we should like progress to be made. Unfortunately, however, that seems unlikely as a result of the reviews.

I appreciate that the Minister will specifically deal with the death grant. The Minister for Social Security stated his concern or objections about the system that we would propose, which would involve a higher £200 or £250 death grant, available across the board and reclaimable from the estate. He fairly pointed out that even that would not be enough for some people. But it is surely not beyond the wit of the DHSS to devise a structure whereby at the time of burial and of greatest distress to the relatives and dependants there would be no need to go through the difficulty and indignity of having to make some special application, perhaps subject to interview. They could receive the initial payment as of right. If it then proved to be too much, the money could be reclaimed from the estate, but if the sum proved to be too little, the discretionary element could come in later and additional payments could be made. I do not see why that should sit so uneasily beside the Government's proposals.

We are glad to have had the opportunity to raise issues concerning the elderly that arise from this week's social security reviews and from the problems which all hon. Members see every day in their constituencies. We are only sorry that social security reviews which could have been radical and genuinely reformist and more redistributive will not be so. As the Institute of Fiscal Studies has already said, the elderly will be one of the groups to suffer most from those reviews.

The points that have been made, coupled with the difficulties over rent support and having to contribute to a rating system with which the Government themselves are dissatisfied, give us little confidence that the problems of the elderly are fully recognised and appreciated, or that they will receive due attention from the Government. The SDP/Liberal alliance will certainly continue to bring the problems and the priorities of the elderly to the fore both in the House and elsewhere.

6.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am happy to start on at least one note of agreement with the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), in that the debate has been useful and interesting. Within a short time many important points have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House. In the 15 minutes left to me, it will obviously be impossibl to reply to all of them, and so I hope that hon. Members will understand if I do not try to do so. However, I shall certainly try to respond in writing to any points that I cannot touch on now.

We welcome the use that the Liberal party has made of its Opposition day, particularly as it gives us the opportunity to set the record straight. Since 1979, we have had a proud and creditable record of caring for the elderly. The debate gives us an opportunity, however, to shed yet more light on the important and exciting proposals introduced on Monday by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in his social security review. But given the opportunity that the Liberals had, it is surprising that they should have decided to focus on such a subject, especially when one considers their record and their collaboration in keeping the Labour Government in office through the notorious Lib-Lab pact. I well understand that the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) is doubly responsible, because he was not then in the SDP; he had not forsaken his allegiance to the Labour party. But it is important that people should be reminded again and again of the dangers of inflation. Those dangers apply to everyone, but particularly to the elderly. A party that collaborated with another party that

succeeded in achieving an inflation rate of 112 per cent. over five and a bit years has much to answer for to the elderly.

Mr. Steel: I do not wish to lessen the time available to the Minister, but he must recall that during the 18 months of the Lib-Lab pact inflation was reduced from 20 per cent. to 8 per cent.

Mr. Whitney: I should point out that the hon. Member for Stockton, South was quite happy with the deal when the change from the method of accounting in effect denied over £1 billion in today's terms to this country's pensioners.

My right hon. Friend the Minister has already responded to most of the points raised by the leader of the Liberal party, but he has left me to comment on the personal social services. It is important to put the Government's achievements on the record. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that the personal social services are a vital element in the Government's aid to the elderly, and that is why we take great pride in the fact that between 1979-80 and 1983-84 expenditure increased, in real terms, by 18 per cent. For example, net expenditure on local authority residential homes amounted to something approaching £365 million in 1983-84, an increase of about 12 per cent. I could go through the list, and I should be happy to write to the right hon. Member to explain still further the significant increases that have taken place in this sector, which he recognises as important.

Mrs. Beckett: As this is the second time that Conservative Members have taken credit for the Government's record in social services, I should remind them that most of that record comes from the spending of Labour councils, for which they have been criticised. The Conservative councils have a pretty rotten record.

Mr. Whitney: If the hon. Lady looks at the facts, she will understand that that is not the case, but I hope that she will not object to the fact that spending has increased by 18 per cent. in real terms. Therefore, it is a little puzzling to know why—except for the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) who seems to have some understanding of the impact of inflation on the pensioners—hon. Members are constantly pressing us for yet more.

When we talk about pensions, what is referred to as the alliance becomes an even more puzzling creature than it usually is—it is more like a hydra-headed amoeba than an alliance, and most of the heads are quite small. In the Liberal party's response to my right hon. Friend's pension inquiry, it suggested that the target should be to raise the basic pension of a married couple to two thirds the average male earnings. The cost of that would be about £10 billion. It would increase the load of national insurance contributions on employer and employee by about 50 per cent. I wonder whether either pensioners or the working population have any concept of what that Liberal party proposal would mean both for employment and the national economy.

I understand that there are two separate parties within the alliance, but the puzzle is that there seem to be two parties within the SDP. We were pleased to notice that the SDP spokesman in the other place, Lord Roberthall, recognised the tremendous subject that had been opened up. He said that he wanted

> "to congratulate the Government on grasping this nettle at last, which is so full of promise.
>
> I think that most important in what the noble Baroness has said is the reference to the problems of the future. I think our grandchildren are living in a fool's paradise, because the rapid change in the age structure"——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am reluctant to stop the hon. Gentleman, but I trust that he is not quoting a Member of the other place.

Mr. Whitney: I apologise, Mr. Speaker. I was seeking to paraphrase but it became something more than that.

The noble Lord was pointing out the dangers of living in a fool's paradise because the rapid change in the age structure means, as was pointed out earlier, a much smaller number of workers having to pay for a larger number of pensions. It is with that problem that we sought to deal through the proposals that we have made on the phasing out of SERPS.

I am happy to deal with some of the points that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) made because clearly she has failed to understand the impact of our present economic commitments. It is necessary for any sensible Government, as has been widely recognised, to take a careful look at these obligations. The assumptions to which the hon. Lady referred showed a wide variation, but the arguments do not rest on these assumptions alone. If SERPS were to continue unchecked, that would earmark a large slice of public expenditure, and not necessarily direct it where it is most needed. Part of the cost of SERPS would go to boosting occupational pensions, and the central question is not whether we can afford SERPS, but whether the state should be in the business of providing second tier pensions.

Mr. Steen: I do not wish to disturb my hon. Friend's recitative, but will he deal with the point — *[Interruption.]* If my hon. Friend can hear me above the Liberal party's bad behaviour and rabble-rousing, will he direct his mind to my idea that the Government could save quite a bit of money and do a lot of good in developing family and community care by encouraging elderly people to live at home and giving the people with whom they live tax concessions and benefits?

Mr. Whitney: I recognise that as an objective, and some of the moves that the Government have made suggest that we are moving in that direction. I am seeking for the figures, which I cannot find, but the community programme that we have already suggests that we are moving in the right direction and that we recognise the importance of that.

I hope that my hon. Friend will recognise as well that a balance has to be struck. For example, the extension of the invalid care allowance, as my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security has made clear on a number of occasions, is regarded as one of many desirable objectives. However, the problems of the Government as opposed to those of the SDP or the Liberal or Labour parties is that we have to have the responsibility of making choices. We understand the dangers of inflation, not least to retired people.

The hon. Member for Derby, South made an interesting claim about the importance of Beveridge. I think that she was seeking for the quotation:

> "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs."

[Mr. Whitney]

However, she seems to be opposed to any proposal that we are making within the review to target more effectively the available resources. If she would think a little more carefully about

"to each according to his needs";

she would see that better targeting, which is promised in the review, will achieve exactly that.

I am seeking to answer as many as I can of the important points that have been made, but it will be difficult for me to cover them all in the available time. The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye spoke about the need for integration of taxes and benefits, and we recognise that as a desirable objective in many ways. However, there are serious problems, with which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is looking forward to dealing.

There has been much talk of Beveridge and I refer hon. Members and particularly the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale to what Sir William Beveridge, himself a Liberal, said:

"The State in organising security should not stifle incentive, opportunity, responsibility; in establishing a national minimum, should leave room and encouragement for voluntary action by each individual to provide more than that minimum for himself and his family."

Those are the objectives that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's review will achieve.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 156, Noes 267.

Division No. 230] **[7 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McCrea, Rev William
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rowlands, Ted
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. A. J. Beith and
Mr. John Cartwright.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip

Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Maples, John
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises the Government's achievement in increasing the value of the retirement pension and welcomes the Government's continued commitment to protect its value; congratulates the Government on carrying out a thorough review of the social security system; and endorses the aim of ensuring a coherent and soundly based benefit structure to meet the needs of pensioners and others.

Wages Councils

7.12 pm

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): I beg to move,

That this House agrees with the conclusion of the Employment Committee that wages councils should not be abolished.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Penhaligon: The legislation on wages councils is of some maturity. It dates back to 1909, which shows a level of endurance, and, I believe, a civilisation by Parliament. We believe that the legislation enshrined in the law the concept that within our capitalist, entrepreneurial society there will be a level beyond which people will not be exploited. That was fundamental to the argument in 1909, and it is fundamental to the argument that I wish to present today. That argument was good enough for the House in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, but today we live in a different era. Even such basic concepts as that have to be argued and fought for.

In principle, the wages councils set for several categories of employees minimum rates of pay and minimum employment conditions that should be obeyed. Most of the regulations insist upon adult pay rates of about £65 to £72 a week. A single person receiving that would have a take-home pay of £61 a week and a married man £65 a week. The average for the whole lot is just short of £70 a week.

The issue whether we should abolish or reform has, in one form or another, been the subject of political debate and argument for a least two or three years. The Government played with it under pressure from their own Back Benches, and eventually produced a consultative document, which comes up with the alternatives of abolish or reform. Everyone in the House knows what abolition means; that is a simple state to deal with. However, reform can mean anything. It can mean virtual abolition. At the same time, it can mean a great extension and strengthening, so I suppose that the optimist in me must say that there is at least some hope for a civilisation on this issue.

Several arguments are paraded in favour of abolition. The favourite one, in the era in which we live, is not surprising—it is jobs. Various documents and economic theories suggest that if there were a 1 per cent. reduction in average pay that would create up to about 150,000 jobs. Therefore, one does not lightly dismiss arguments in this area. It is worth remembering relative to the figures of £65 to £72 a week that average pay is currently £178 a week. My hon. Friends and I believe that some wage settlements currently being made mitigate against the national recovery, and certainly against a reduction in unemployment. That is my honest, candid view. However, those pay increases are in the higher categories. They are not for the people earning the income that I have mentioned. We believe that if one extrapolates that basic argument, in which there is some truth, to this category, it is standing all logic on its head, and possibly putting several people in a position that we find unacceptable.

As I have said, we do not dismiss the possibility that there is some substance in the argument to which I have just referred. However, we find little evidence that reducing wage rates from between £65 and £72 a week to between £55 and £62 a week would create a significant number of extra new jobs. The best estimate that I can find is that if the wages councils were abolished 8,000 jobs would be produced. To put it in perspective, that is fewer than 16 jobs per constituency. Average unemployment is now over 5,000 per constituency. Even if that figure underestimated reality by a factor of two, 32 jobs relative to 5,000 is of very little significance.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Department of Employment has given me the following figures in relation to the average wages of young people, at whom is often aimed the assertion that if their wages were reduced more jobs could be created? The average wage for school leavers relative to adult rates has fallen by 8 per cent. for boys and 12 per cent. for girls during the lifetime of this Government, yet youth unemployment has trebled. In other words, the evidence from the Department showing falling wage rates has shown no increase in employment but a trebling of unemployment.

Mr. Penhaligon: I have seen those figures before somewhere. It might be because the hon. Gentleman produced them. I shall refer to youth pay. I do not totally dismiss what the hon. Gentleman says.

A few people believe that the abolition of wages councils would allow pay to increase. I have heard few hon. Members argue that in the House. I do not know whether that is the view of the Minister or his Department. I regard it as fantasy of the first order.

Let us ask ourselves what would happen if wages councils were abolished. What evidence can one produce? The truth is that little can be produced. I believe that their abolition would reduce pay. Many low-paid jobs are already not covered by wages councils. One can examine the pay structure in that area and judge what might happen in similar jobs that happen to be inside wages councils. Let me give the Minister an example. In my constituency, a young woman who is a qualified florist came to see me. She had been through the course to become a florist, and was highly regarded in that skill. Her employment boiled down to preparing wreaths and sprays and making the flowers that are grown in my part of the country, among others, into a more attractive item to persuade people to part with their money. In another part of the same enterprise, a young woman of similar age works behind the counter of the shop.

Reason suggests that the person behind the scenes doing the skilled work should be paid more than the person behind the counter taking the orders, but that is not so because the young woman on the counter is defended by the wages council to the tune of £67 to £72 per week whereas the other is not. I believe that if wages councils were abolished many more people would be in the position of the qualified florist who is paid less than her colleague at the counter.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I believe that 17 wages councils have been abolished since 1960. Can the hon. Gentleman give evidence to show that wages in those industries have been reduced?

Mr. Penhaligon: One of the wages councils that were abolished protected the minimum pay of whalebone corset manufacturers. From observation in my constituency and

in the House, I suspect that the outlet for those products is somewhat limited nowadays, so the three people still making them may well be paid less than in the past.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): The wages council for the cutlery industry was abolished in 1969.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Why was it abolished?

Mr. Baldry: It was abolished because it was thought that under the legislation collective bargaining was adequate to protect the employees in that industry, but research by the Department of Employment into the impact of abolition concluded that there had been no significant improvement in wage determination, no catching up with the rates achieved by voluntary collective bargaining in similar industries and, indeed, sufficient evidence of underpayment of female workers to suggest that protection had deterioriated since abolition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. There are three Front-Bench speakers in this short debate and a number of other hon. Members wish to catch my eye. Interventions from Members waiting to catch my eye do not improve their chances of doing so.

Mr. Penhaligon: One likes to encourage maximum participation on these occasions, but I think that there have been five speeches so far, and I note your comment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Another example of which I have experience is the village sub-post office with a retailing business attached. If an employee's duties include the selling of Mars bars and the like, that person is defended by a wages council to the tune of £67 to £72 per week; but the person employed only behind the post office counter dealing with large amounts of state money in pensions and benefits is not protected and in many cases the wages are lower. There are many other examples. I know of tyre fitters being paid between £45 and £50 per week.

It may be argued that these are fringe examples and that hard cases make bad law, but I argue that they are not fringe cases. The Minister's own document states that of the 2·7 million people covered by wages councils about 1 million earn the wages council minimum or just a pittance more, so all those people are influenced by wages council settlements. With regard to the impact on employment, subparagraph 8 of the Government document states that

"those figures suggest that the wages council rates are now higher than would be necessary to recruit and retain workers."

That is the Government's own view, and I agree with it entirely. There is thus no argument between us and the Minister — there may be some argument from Conservative Back Benchers, although not from the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry)—that the abolition of wages councils will do anything other than reduce wages. In this context, I remind the House that we are talking about minimum wages of £67 to £72 per week.

There are a couple of documents supporting abolition. The document submitted by the Institute of Directors advocates outright abolition. I put some energy into trying to discover any categorisation of directors' pay in the new earnings survey but was unable to do so. I suspect, however, that their earnings are nearer £70 per day than £70 per week. The institute baldly states that 54 per cent. of its members believe that they would employ more people if wages councils were abolished.

One does not simply dismiss evidence of that calibre, so let us consider the way in which that magnificent figure was produced. Of the 2,000 members of the institute consulted about the Government's document relating to abolition, only 130 responded, 30 per cent. of whom said they had no experience and therefore no knowledge of this area and thus had no strong view one way or the other. The great Institute of Directors survey thus comes down to just 91 people's responses, 70 of whom said that they might take on more staff. That is 3½ per cent. of the institute's membership, not the 54 per cent. suggested on the front page of the submission.

That is a disgracefully shoddy piece of work by a body which, on the whole, one respects and it shows no interest in or understanding of the circumstances that we are discussing. If the business decisions of members of the Institute of Directors are based on such flimsy evidence, it is no wonder that Britain is in trouble. Some of them should try living on £70 per week rather than £70 per day.

The other substantial body in favour of abolition is the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses, which tends to major on the complexity of some wages council regulations. Paragraph 12 of the Government document refers to a set of wages council regulations comprising 30 pages of closely typed instructions, and the wages inspectorate concluded that half the underpayments discovered in its random survey —not its detailed survey—were due more to ignorance than to malice, and that is the wages councils' own view. That suggests that there is room for simplification, so I do not defend every detail of the present situation.

The wages councils' own evidence states that 35 per cent. of visits found evidence of underpayment. That figure contrasts with the 6 per cent. found in the random survey, but visits occur largely when problems have been brought to the attention of a wages council by employees, other employers or, no doubt, Members of Parliament. I make no complaint about that. One recognises that the sample for visits is skewed and I do not know whether the figures are exactly 35 per cent. or 6 per cent., but let us take the 6 per cent. It shows beyond question that the current regulations are more complicated than they need be. Therefore, some simplification may be suitable.

Some of the members of the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses to whom I talk are aware that, in many cases, the wages councils protect them. If, for example, business A is offering the community a service and paying its employees £70 a week, and business B comes along to compete and pays its employees £50 a week, I have news for the owner of business A: he is likely to be in some difficulty fairly soon. Many people recognise that, at the end of the economy, wages councils operate to their advantage.

Some of those who claim that they could produce extra jobs if wages councils were abolished seem to base that suggestion on their ability to undercut their competitors. They say, "If I pay my employees £60 a week, I can employ more, because I will undercut the man up the road and grab some of his business." The employer up the road is likely to hit back in the obvious way. Therefore, I believe that few jobs will be created by the abolition of the wages councils.

The major complaint is about wages for the young. I note that all the categories of business pay what is called in the document the adult rate at the age of 18, except for the boot and shoe repair industry, which pays it at 20; the

[Mr. Penhaligon]

hairdressing industry, which pays it at 20; the retail food trade, which pays it at 19; and the sack and bag industry, which also pays it at 19. Logic suggests that if an employer is given a choice between employing a 28-year-old with eight or 10 years' experience, and an 18-year-old with only one or two years' experience, at the same rate of pay, regardless of all the surveys and the comments of the philosophers who analyse such matters, the 28-year-old stands a better chance of getting a job.

Part of the problem is that we define adulthood legally as the age of 18, but an 18-year-old is not always trained and experienced. In other European countries, the main rate recommended by minimum wage legislation — Britain is by no means unique in having such legislation — is paid only to older people. For example, in Denmark, the consolidated rate is paid at the age of 23. I believe that that is too old, and would suggest 21 as the most suitable age. However, I warn the House that changes in this area will not create more jobs. All that will happen is the substitution of mature workers by younger workers, but there is some justification for arguing that the system should be changed. In some areas, the consolidated — or experienced — rate should apply to 21-year-olds, not to 18 or 19-year-olds.

Some believe that the Government will abolish all protection for those aged under 21. That would go tragically too far. The justification for this legislation is that it protects the vulnerable in society, and we all know that probably the most vulnerable section of society is the under-21s. It stands logic on its head to abolish protection for them. Furthermore, if protection is removed completely, when many people reach the age of 21 they will be sacked. Hon. Members should realise that some people suddenly lose their jobs simply because they have moved up a bracket in the pay range. I beg the Secretary of State not to introduce as a compromise the scrapping of regulations governing employees aged under 21.

Mr. Baldry: What proportion of the adult rate would the hon. Gentleman suggest those aged between 16 and 21 should get? At present, 22 of the 26 wages councils pay a disproportionately higher rate to young people than 16-year-olds receive elsewhere in the economy.

Mr. Penhaligon: I have made it clear that there is some necessity for movement in that area. I do not dodge the hon. Gentleman's question. However, he cannot expect me to come up with a figure for wages should the basic regulations be changed. That is a matter for negotiation by the wages councils within their spheres of influence. But if the House says that it wishes the consolidated rate to operate from the age of 21, I believe that action would be taken to implement it.

The Secretary of State produced a consultative document mainly to try to quell the hard core on the Conservative Back Benches. He knows already that the Select Committee on Employment is against total abolition. The Auld report, at page 66, came out firmly against abolition of the wages councils. The CBI is against it. One is not surprised, but one does not dismiss it for that, that the Low Pay Unit and the Child Poverty Action Group are against it. The Labour party, the Liberal party, the Social Democratic party and the nationalist parties are all against total abolition. The citizens' advice bureaux are certainly against abolition, and they have day-to-day experience of dealing with the problems that arise in this area. The British Institute of Management is against abolition.

There could be a much more intelligent debate on the subject if the Government accepted the Liberal motion, which is simplicity itself. Let us make it clear that total abolition is not an option, and that doing nothing is not an option. Between those two extremes, we could have a much more sane, sensible and civilised debate. We believe that there is a case for simplification, and that not all workers are experienced and mature at the age of 19, but that there is no case for abolition. Indeed, it may be worth considering an improvement in the endorsement procedure in some areas.

The Liberal party has used one of its rare Supply days to raise this subject because it believes that the Parliament of our capitalist, competititive society should send out the clear message that there is a point beyond which people shall not be exploited. The miserable wages that we are defending range between £65 and £72 a week. The alliance is defending that, but the Government, by issuing their consultation paper, are attacking it, or at least putting it under scrutiny. The Secretary of State probably agrees with much of what I said, but some of the hard men on the Conservative Back Benches will have different views.

This legislation was good from the 1920s to the 1970s. It is a reflection on our Government, on the era in which we live and on the ideas that are foisted upon the British people that we must spend parliamentary time defending such miserable wages. I invite the House to vote for our motion and to clear up this matter once and for all.

7.38 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Tom King): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'notes that the period for consultation on the consultative document on wages councils is only just ending and representations are still being received; and asks the Government to take into account the views of the Employment Committee, together with the very many other responses from interested organisations and individuals.'.

The Government's amendment makes it clear why we cannot accept the motion introduced by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon). We do not intend to set aside, at the moment of their reception, the many representations and comments that have been made in response to our consultative document. Despite the hyperbole of his peroration, the hon. Gentleman must realise that it would be a disgrace for the House — I hope that the Liberal party would have nothing to do with it — to treat with contempt the representations of people who are informed and involved. They will certainly be considered by the Government, although the hon. Gentleman seems to be prepared to ignore them.

The hon. Gentleman knows that 31 May was the date set for the end of the consultation period. We are just ending that consultation period, and six further serious representations were made today. They are still coming in, and I am sure that the House would wish us to continue to consider all the representations that can be taken into account, even if, technically, they fall just outside the deadline. I hope that all those who believe in a serious consultation of this nature will support our amendment and realise that that must be the right way to proceed.

As I have said, we are still receiving a massive number of representations. The lunch-time score today was 667.

I therefore welcome the opportunity provided by this debate for the House to make its comments, and I shall certainly take note of them.

I apologise for the fact that there has been a discontinuity of Ministers. There was a debate in the early hours of the morning during the proceedings on the Consolidated Fund, but at present my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary is attending a meeting of the ILO in Geneva. I hope, therefore, that the House will accept me as an inadequate substitute for him on this occasion.

The House will recall the background to the consultative document. It was originally announced in the Budget speech as part of a range of measures specifically targeted towards the issue of unemployment. It will also be recalled that in the Budget debate the Chancellor and I announced a series of measures, including the development of the two-year youth training scheme, the expansion of a further 100,000 places in the community programme to help the long-term unemployed and new pilot projects as a means of providing further valuable work for the long-term unemployed. They include schemes managed by the private sector and those that involve work in charities.

We also looked at ways in which we could remove any obstacles to the creation of the maximum number of jobs. In that connection, there was a general welcome in the House for the proposals to reduce the starting rate for national insurance contributions at the lower level as a means of reducing the cost of taking on new employees. In addition, we have tried to ease the burden or remove any obstacle which might exist in relation to employment protection. That has already been carried through. We also identified the problem of the wages councils. As a result, I announced our proposals and published a consultative paper.

In the Budget debate I set out the reasons why the Government believed that the changes were needed. As we know, wages councils specify rates of pay and detailed conditions for 2·75 million workers in 26 industries. The hon. Member for Truro said that the system was first introduced in 1909, against a background of much public concern about "sweating", the three components of which were inadequate wage rates, excessive hours of labour and the insanitary state of the houses in which the work was carried out. That was the background against which the original trade boards were established.

However, economic conditions have changed significantly since that time. The welfare state has been established, real average pay is much higher and average hours of work are much lower. There is now an extensive range of legislation aimed at protecting the welfare and health and safety of employees. The development of systems for family support—and the further developments announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services are relevant in that regard—has made a significant new impact on the situation.

I have said that one of the original concerns was the extremely long hours of work, but it is worth remembering that two thirds of the employees covered by wages councils are part-time workers. A significant number produce a second family income, particularly women who work part-time and represent a significant number of those covered by wages councils.

The system has developed piecemeal and is extremely uneven in its application. I read with interest the article in *The Guardian* by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), and it is without offence that I say that the speech of the hon. Member for Truro covered many of the points made in that article. However, I challenge hon. Members to walk down any high street in the country and to identify which shops are covered by wages councils and which are not. The application of wages councils is piecemeal, and it is extremely difficult to identify any great distinction between those for whom the wages councils are supposed to provide protection and those for whom they do not operate.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I am one of two elected Members who represent 400,000 shop workers. How many of them will not be covered if wages councils are abolished? Why are the Government not prepared to accept the Auld report's recommendation on the retention of the wages councils?

Mr. King: I am, of course, aware of that relationship, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has already made our position clear. In advance of legislation on the Auld report, the Government recognise the need to make clear their position on wages councils As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, that was raised in the Auld report.

Against that background, a range of complaints is widely recognised. One concern often expressed is the problem of the levels of pay of young people, and there is evidence that they are above the going rate that may exist in other industries. The mistake that was made by the hon. Member for Truro—it was a point in his right hon. Friend's article with which I disagreed—was to suggest that somehow there would be competition for a job between a 28-year-old at a fixed rate of pay and a 17-year-old at the same rate of pay. Instead, we should consider whether there is an alternative job at a lower rate of pay. I make no apology for saying that, because in Germany and other countries rates of between 30 and 40 per cent. of adult pay are considered reasonable as the starting rate. That gets more young people into jobs. However, so long as the adult rate is satisfactory, the problem of the starting rate for young people must be looked at very seriously. It should not just be considered in the context of substitution between the older and the younger person.

Mrs. Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Does my right hon. Friend also agree that people at that age and with such a short amount of experience cannot possibly be worth the amount which employers are asked to pay at that stage in their working lives? Is it not totally unrealistic to force an employer to pay more money than an employee is actually worth?

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Do not be so arrogant, you mean and silly woman:

Mr. King: I am appalled by the reception given to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Mrs. Knight). It is obvious that Opposition Members do not understand that in certain cases what she said is undoubtedly true. In certain cases, a 16-year-old is not worth £55 a week when starting out. I am anxious that youngsters should get training and jobs. It is acceptable to trade unions and all political parties in, for example, West Germany that youngsters should start on about £27 a week. Why is there much lower youth unemployment there?

[Mr. King]

Why do some people here, who are living in the past, insist on negotiating wages of £50 or £60 a week? By doing that, they are condemning a lot of young people to unemployment. I care about that and about a blinkered attitude which just shouts down a perfectly constructive comment.

There are anxieties about the wages councils and about the complexity and length of the reports. The wages inspectors bear out the fact that many offences arise out of misunderstandings because of the length of the reports. Considerable difficulties have been caused by the practice of some wages councils of making retrospective awards. Employers suddenly discover that they have a bill for which they have not budgeted.

As the hon. Member for Truro said, employment is at the heart of this debate. We put employment at the top of our list of priorities. Every responsible right hon. and hon. Member must take that view. We have decided that there is an urgent need to tackle the problem of unemployment by abolition or reform of wages councils. We have had a staggering response to our consultation document. I do not wish to anticipate what conclusions we should draw, but I should like to give a summary of the responses. I acknowledge the response of the Select Committee on Employment and the minority report of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham). We had 667 responses by lunch-time today, and they are still coming in.

The Trades Union Congress and the unions have made clear their opposition to abolition, although some unions have joined the reform lobby because they think that simplification is important for more effective enforcement. Employers, the Institute of Directors and the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses obviously favour abolition. The Confederation of British Industry has suggested abolition, unless there is a request from both sides to retain wages councils, but maintains that there should nevertheless be radical simplification. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce wants radical reform. There is significant pressure in the hotel and catering industry for abolition. Organisations which advocate reform but not abolition have concentrated on issues mentioned in the consultation paper, such as the exclusion of young people, the setting of a percentage of the adult rate as a maximum, simplification involving a single rate for adults, amalgamations or reductions in the numbers of wages councils, and the elimination of retrospection and of independent members as a means of simplifying the operations of wages councils.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Has my right hon. Friend considered representations on behalf of the 3 million unemployed, because they suffer most from the effects of wages councils?

Mr. King: It is precisely because of the potential for extra jobs that we are considering the matter. The consultation period is ending. We have received many representations and we are reviewing them, so the debate comes at an opportune moment.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): As the right hon. Gentleman has attempted to give us some of the figures, will he tell us how many representations he has received in favour of outright abolition?

Mr. King: I have only the figure of representations received—667. I have picked out a few views which are already public. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] There is no secret about this. I shall be anxious to disclose the results of the consultation. Representations are still coming in. We have received six more today. I do not have a breakdown, but the right hon. Gentleman knows that the total includes representations from major institutions such as the CBI and the TUC. We have had one representation from the alliance. A Liberal councillor has written to us. That is the only representation that we have had from the alliance so far, and I welcome it. That is why the debate has been so valuable. It is important to measure the merits or quality as well as the numbers of representations.

I am sure that the House agrees that it is important to reach an early decision. With the leave of the House, I shall respond to the debate. In the meantime, I shall listen with interest.

7.47 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I should like to make clear the Labour party's opposition to the threatened abolition of wages councils. We have outlined our stance in our amendment, which states that the Labour party

"rejects the Government's claim that reducing the pay and conditions of low-paid workers will create more jobs; condemns the Government's deliberate weakening of the Wages Inspectorate by cutting their numbers by one-third"—

the Government are already undermining the system and now we are discussing whether it should be undermined further—

"thus encouraging bad employers to break the law".

We hear much from the Government about law and order and respect for the law, but there are some laws such as those which are supposed to protect the wages of the lowest paid for which they have no respect. As the motion continues, the Labour party

"calls for the strengthening of wages councils to improve the protection of these workers, most of whom are women, young people and ethnic minorities."

It was not clear whether the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) spoke for the Liberal party or for the alliance, but the motion is enormously weak. The Government have manipulated the press and public opinion time and again—their method seems to work, although it is crude. They always threaten more than they intend to do, and do less. I do not believe that they intend to abolish all wages councils. That would be too unpopular and they would pay too high a political price. They intend to exempt major groups from their protection—young people and perhaps part-time women workers—and to undermine further the system which they have already weakened by cuts in the inspectorate. It is clear from the consultative document that this is one possibility that the Government are considering. The Liberal motion says nothing about that, perhaps because of the difference on this question between the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party. As usual, there seem to be grave differences between the two parties.

On 23 May 1985, writing in *The Times*, the leader of the Social Democratic party told us how new technology could lead to full employment and jobs for everyone—a thesis with which I agree. He said that there is one grave threat to the possibility of the restoration of full employment, and that is that some of the new jobs will be low-paid jobs in the services sector. He said:

"not all new jobs in the service sector will be high-skilled, high value-added, high-wage jobs. Along with the professional jobs and the jobs in IT will also be a lot of traditionally lower wage jobs in areas such as fast foods, retailing and health care.

This has two critical policy implications. It is imperative not to prevent these jobs emerging by minimum wage legislation".

There is minimum wage legislation in the wages council system. On 23 February, the leader of the Social Democratic party was not in favour of minimum wage legislation. I have always suspected that he makes up his party's policies in the bath and announces different policies depending upon how he feels.

The National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers is deeply worried about the prospect of the abolition of wages councils. It represents workers in the textile industry who work in sweatshops—some of which are in my constituency—which are increasing in number. The union has sent us a letter that the leader of the Social Democratic party sent to one union member. On 22 May, the day before the article in *The Times*, the right hon. Gentleman seemed to be in favour of retaining wages councils but thought there might be scope for reform. He thought there should be less protection for school leavers and people with a second income. We know that he meant women but, just to show that the Social Democratic party favours sexual equality, the right hon. Gentleman referred to

"perhaps the second wage earners in the family household—male or female—if wages were more flexible."

Mr. Thurnham: May I help the hon. Lady with some comments on the Liberal party's views? She mentioned the garment industry. I think that she would accept that the wages of garment workers are determined by the world prices of their goods. The Liberal party has differing views on world prices—the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) says one thing about the multi-fibre agreement and the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) says the opposite.

Ms. Short: I understand that the hon. Gentleman wants all controls to be abolished. I suppose that he wants Britain's textile workers to compete for wages with workers in Bangladesh.

The leader of the Social Democratic party seems unable to make up his mind between one day and another whether he favours any minimum wage legislation. On Monday 3 June, in an article on the agenda page in *The Guardian*, as a trailer for this debate, the leader of the Liberal party tells us that we must retain and expand wages councils. A major difference between the views of the two parties is found in that statement. He stated:

"there is definitely a case for saying that wages councils may"

—

"may" is an interesting word—

"deter some firms from taking on young people by insisting that they are paid the same £63-£72 per week as older employees."

The right hon. Gentleman is mistaken in thinking that young people must be paid the adult rate. It seems that young people should be exempted from the protection offered by wages councils.

The Government assert that the evidence suggests that abolition or major reform is needed. When the Government discuss reform in the consultative document, they mean further weakening of the wages council system. Let us be in no doubt about that. The Government assert that weakening the system or abolition will produce jobs. Despite enormous efforts by the Government to produce evidence to support this prejudiced and dogmatic view, as Centre Forward calls it, the Government have failed to produce convincing evidence of this case. The Select Committee's report shows that clearly, stating in paragraph 17:

"Thus the empirical evidence submitted to the Select Committee does not provide unambiguous support for the notion that the elimination of Wages Councils would have the sort of employment effect which would provide an overwhelming case for abolition."

In paragraph 19, the Select Committee states:

"Ministers did not give an estimate of the increase in the number of jobs which might be expected to result from abolition; when pressed to do so in respect of young people, they were unable to: the message was 'try it and see'."

Why do we not try it? Why do we not cut the wages levels of people on £60 a week, just in case it will provide a few jobs? That is the proposition that is put before us.

It is incredible how the Government have managed to make the senior Civil Service—an old part of the British establishment—so deviant that it constantly leaks documents. One leaked document tells us something very interesting. The Government have been trying to move in this direction since taking office in 1979. The Government keep commissioning research that does not prove their case. If Ministers will not act as desired, it is a case of chuck them out, get new academics and Ministers and try again. Here we are, the third time round. In a minute dated 12 February 1981, Mr. M. Wake says that, in November 1980—the Government got on to this matter quite quickly after 1979:

"E(EA) Committee . . . accepted the Secretary of State's arguments for retaining the Wages Council system".

A report covered by the minutes states:

"The inter-Departmental report by officials which was considered by Ministers at E(EA)"—

that is a Cabinet employment sub-committee—

"found no evidence of any significant loss of employment directly attributable to the setting up of minimum rates by wages councils."

It seems that the Cabinet was persuaded. Following that decision, the Secretary of State was asked to

"examine whether it might be possible to remove young people and part-time workers from the scope of Wages Council awards".

The draft paper prepared for submission to that Cabinet sub-committee shows the conclusions of the review by the Secretary of State. It states:

"The case for exclusion is based on the suggestion that job opportunities for young persons and part-time workers would be increased if employers were free to take them on at less than the statutory minimum rates set by the wages councils. When made, the suggestion usually comes from small shopkeepers."

There are more and more of them in the House.

"Exclusion of these groups has not been advocated by the employers' associations represented on the Councils (including those predominantly representing small businesses) although the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses Ltd. has recently urged the total abolition of the wages council system.

The facts are that statutory minimum rates for young persons and part-timers are lower than comparable collectively bargained rates, and rates actually paid frequently exceed the statutory minima. In practice, therefore, there is unlikely to be any very significant scope generally for increasing job opportunities thereby. To whatever extent this did happen, it would be largely at the expense of the jobs of full-time adult bread-winners"—

that means throwing the parents out of work and giving the low paid work to their kids; this is the way in which we are going forward to Britain in the 1990s—

"since there is no plausible evidence that it would significantly increase job opportunities overall in the wages council sectors."

That Secretary of State—no longer a member of the Government—was asked to review the question whether

[Ms. Short]

wage councils should be abolished. He reviewed an interdepartmental report and found that there was no case for abolition. The Cabinet committee accepted that. He was asked to look at the possibility of excluding young workers and part-time workers and found that there was absolutely no case for it. But he was thrown out, so here we are looking at it the second or third time round. The Government were determined. If the facts did not fit their prejudices, never mind, kick out the Minister and try again, commission more research and find some academics who will say the right thing.

Yesterday the Low Pay Unit issued a briefing which makes very serious allegations about the way that the Department of Employment has been conducting its academic research. The briefing was prepared by Mr. Frank Wilkinson, a research economist at Cambridge university, who has carried out a number of research studies for the Department of Employment over the years. We understand what it means to that man. He will not carry out any more research studies while this Government are in power, so obviously he really means what he says in his report.

Mr. Butterfill: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Short: I am sorry; I am very short of time.

Mr. Wilkinson makes the serious charge that the Government are fabricating and distorting the evidence that comes from the research that they commission. I will briefly summarise the case that he made.

The Department of Employment commissioned a study of the effects of the retailing wages council from independent academics, but when the results became available last year they were embarrassing. Contrary to ministerial researches, the research found that minimum wages had had no effect on employment.

The Department of Employment did not publish the report until this May, and in the meantime hurriedly assembled its own report on the effect of wages councils in the clothing industry, which it then published on the same day. The clothing report came to remarkable conclusions for an industry in which relative wages had fallen since the 1950s by 20 per cent. for men and 13 per cent. for women. The Department of Employment concluded that wages were to blame for unemployment. Mr. Wilkinson points out that that conclusion could have been reached only by the improper use of data and a muddled methodology. Certainly the report bears all the signs of being put together very quickly and with a decided lack of competence.

The Department of Employment report ignored completely the effect of falling demand and imports in looking for an explanation of the decline of the clothing industry, preferring instead to place the blame on the industry's wages councils, but its conclusion is at odds with the perception of firms within the industry, 86 per cent. of which attributed the fall in employment to lack of demand and import penetration. So much for the research that we now get from the Department of Employment.

The final point from Mr. Wilkinson is that, using methodology and data considerably more reliable than that used in the Department of Employment study of clothing, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food analysed the impact of the minimum wage for farm workers. The report concluded that an increase in the value of the minimum wage increased both the demand for and the supply of labour, and hence employment. Again, the findings were in complete contradiction of the views of Ministers on the effect of minimum wages. The Department of Employment is quite unjustified in suggesting that the research findings demonstrate convincingly the potential for minimum wage increases to affect employment adversely. The Department is saying exactly the opposite of what it found in its research.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Will the hon. Lady give way.

Ms. Short: No, I am so short of time. *[Interruption.]* I am not scared of Conservative Members. I may give way later if I find that I can get through my speech in time. *[Interruption.]* I have more to say than the Secretary of State. On the Labour Benches we care about the wage levels of low-paid people. Conservative Members can sit there smugly and richly while wanting to cut the wages of people who work 40 hours a week for £67.

The consultative document produced by the Government is enormously biased. It does not ask openly for a discussion of the effect of wages councils, whether they destroy jobs or not, or whether people want them to be strengthened, weakened or modified. In the light of the research evidence, what the consultative document says is disgraceful. Paragraph 7 says that

"Wages councils interfere with the freedom of employers to offer, and jobs-seekers to accept, jobs at wages that would otherwise be acceptable. This restricts job opportunities, particularly for young people".

Paragraph 8 says that

"A number of studies support the view that statutory minimum rates jeopardise employment."

I have just dealt with the studies that prove that statement to be wrong.

Tory Back Benchers pretend that they care about the low paid, but they are quite prepared to sacrifice young people on the altar. They are going for the young people. The consultative documents suggest that they should be removed from protection, even if the wages councils stay. That means that, even if we retain wages councils, we must denounce the International Labour Organisation convention. But what does the ILO tell us about the position in the rest of the world? It says that

"Almost all countries in the world now operate minimum wage systems, and none to our knowledge excludes young workers. The latter are entitled to such protection as any workers, and even more so because they are more vulnerable to possible exploitation due to their inexperience and perhaps because of their very desire to earn a living by finding a first job."

Since 1979— *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members should look at the evidence instead of showing their prejudices. Since 1979 youth unemployment has doubled but the relative pay of young people has fallen sharply over the same period. Young males have received pay rises 23 per cent. lower than the average increase for adult males. Young women's pay has fallen 20 per cent. behind the equivalent increase for adults.

A Department of Employment research — *[Interruption.]* I have only 15 minutes and Conservative Members will have their opportunity later. A Department of Employment research paper, published in 1980, concluded that

"variations in youth unemployment do not appear to have any systematic relationship with changes in the relative earnings of young people".

That is a fine piece of research by a man called Makeham. It shows that youth unemployment grows faster than

general unemployment and that it falls faster when unemployment is falling. It has nothing to do with wage levels, and there is no evidence for that.

A more recent paper, published by the Department of Employment in 1983, contradicts the earlier finding. This is one of those pieces of academic research that the Department of Employment hunted for in trying to find some academic who would provide a case in support of its prejudices. The paper tentatively suggests that the employment of young people under 18 years of age appears to have been reduced by increases in their average earnings. The author warns, however, that the analysis relies on data which are already fraught with problems and that therefore the results are extremely tenuous. His warning that the results should be viewed with caution appears to have been wholly ignored by Ministers, and it has been quoted in this House repeatedly. The final point in that piece of research is that, to the extent that cuts in youth wages did result in new jobs, that would be largely at the expense of adult workers. What is the point of that?

The Department of Employment study that I have just quoted estimates that eight out of 10 new jobs created for young people, if their wages were cut, would be jobs lost by adults. It costs more to keep an adult on the dole, so it does not even make economic sense from the Government's point of view.

The Public Accounts Committee found that 77 per cent. of the jobs subsidised under the young workers' scheme that the Government are now getting rid of, but which was deliberately used to try to cut youth wages, would have existed anyway, even without the subsidy. The vast bulk of the additional jobs that were created were taken away from adults.

It is not just that there is no case for abolition of wages councils, or weakening the position of young people or excluding them. There is a strong case against doing so, not just on the basis of social justice—to which I shall refer in a moment — but on the ground of the inefficiency that is encouraged.

In the words of Mr. Frank Wilkinson,

"Employers' attempts to escape from competitive pressure by attempting to reduce their wage costs can only be temporary and in the long run are counter-productive. The ability to protect profits by reducing wages allows producers to avoid any long-term solution of their lack of competitiveness by reinvesting in improved efficiency or developing new products. Moreover, the availability of lower wages as a strategy creates a particularly destructive form of competition which undermines product market stability, upon which favourable expectations depend. The consequent uncertainty militates against long term solutions."

We get the bad employer paying rotten wages, not investing, and not training his staff. They undermine each other, lower the conditions of employment, and increase Britain's chronic unemployment problem and the problem of very low investment. The road that we are going on is to cut wages to such a degree that we shall be competing with Third world countries for jobs.

I come now to social security. Two days ago, the Secretary of State for Social Services told us—and the Prime Minister repeated it—that in the review of the social security system they were deeply concerned about the needs of the working poor. Yet the Government are suggesting that it would be a really good idea to cut the wages of the working poor.

Mr. Baldry: Who said that it would be a good idea to reduce the wages of the working poor?

Ms. Short: The proposal to abolish wages councils is a proposal to cut the wages of some of the poorest workers, otherwise there would be no point in the Government making the proposal.

The new family credit scheme, which is to replace the family income supplement, is a subsidy to bad employers paying low wages and lacking investment and training. If the Government want to subsidise British business, they should put money into firms which invest in training, higher technology and so on. Instead, they propose to spend more of the taxpayers' money on subsidising the worst employers in the land.

Who are the people protected by wages councils whose conditions the Government are anxious to undermine? We are speaking of 2·75 million people, 11 per cent. of the work force. About two thirds of them work part time. Any threat to remove protection from part-time workers is a threat to the majority of those people. Four out of five of them are women and half of all women workers are protected by wages councils. This, therefore, represents an enormous threat to women.

About 5 per cent. of people protected by wages councils are young. That may be a small percentage of the total, but it represents 20 per cent. of all young workers, and 90 per cent. of them work in retailing, catering and clothing. Large numbers of them are black workers — *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may smirk and grin at the evidence, but prejudice is all that they are interested in.

We are told by the Select Committee that 25 per cent. of families classified as poor have a low earner at their head, and that proportion rises to 40 per cent. when pensioner families are excluded. In other words, although 40 per cent. of poor families in Britain have a low paid worker at their head, the Government want to cut their wages.

Would anyone dare argue that, because most women work, they really work only for pin money? I am sure that many Conservative Members think that. Would they dare say it openly? In one in four households the main breadwinner is a woman. These are households in which there are single women, sometimes with dependent relatives, and one in eight women look after an elderly dependant. Alternatively, a single parent is bringing up children on her own. One in 10 households is headed by a single-parent mother. Women are the sole earners, because of the unemployment of their partners, in 400,000 families.

In addition, women's earnings equal or exceed those of their male partners in one in seven of all married couples. If it were not for the earnings of married women, four times as many families would be living in poverty. The low wages that those women earn are absolutely crucial to enable them to look after their dependants and families.

What, then, are the princely wages that the Government want to cut? We are told in the consultative document:

"Most minimum full-time rates at March 1985 for adults ranged from £63 to £72."

For young people we are told that 16-year-olds

"get roughly 65 per cent. of the adult maximum"

and that 17-year-olds

"get 75 per cent. of the adult maximum."

That represents £40 to £50 a week, yet Conservative Members have the cheek to suggest that that is too much for young people to earn. Among those who claim that is

[Ms. Short]

the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Mrs. Knight), who represents a neighbouring constituency but who, unfortunately, is not in her place.

Since 1979, the lowest paid have taken major pay cuts. According to recently published Treasury figures, the highest paid men have enjoyed increases in real net pay 10 times as large as the wages enjoyed by the poorest, and the Government want to increase still further the wages of the better paid and, at the same time, to reduce the wages of the poorest.

The Government have no case for suggesting that the abolition or weakening of wages councils will create jobs. The claim is false and there is no evidence for it. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may laugh, but they cannot laugh away the evidence. What the Government propose will simply encourage bad employers and bad employment practices, low investment and a lack of training. This move is opposed by the public.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Ms. Short: I have taken too long already. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear." Tory Members may not care about the low paid or try to laugh off the evidence that my hon. Friends and I have been adducing, but I wonder whether they care about public opinion. A survey carried out by Mori in 1983 found that 66 per cent. of adults, including 62 per cent. of Conservative supporters, favoured a minimum wage for all workers. A recent opinion survey in the north-west conducted by Granada TV showed that 89 per cent. were in favour of retaining wages council protection.

The Labour party will fight the Conservative party every inch of the way on this issue. We shall fight to retain the protection that low-paid workers have through wages councils and, when we take power, we shall ensure that they have improved protection.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate, so short speeches, please.

8.25 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am grateful for this opportunity to speak, having found myself in a minority of one in dissenting from the Select Committee's report. I am disappointed that the Chairman of the Committee, the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), is not in his place. Indeed, it is extraordinary that the Chairman is not present, especially as I am bound to comment on the way in which the report was put together.

It was surprising that we had a report at all because at one stage it was thought that there would not be one. It was produced at remarkable speed, and that was probably why there were no amendments. At one stage I began to think that I was at a SOGAT meeting, considering the way in which the matter was progressing. I had had a difference of opinion with the Chairman on a previous occasion about GCHQ, and I found that I was getting the same sort of treatment this time. However, I managed to register my dissent before the report went to press.

It was a pity that matters proceeded so quickly because three important items were missed. I am not sure whether I am a believer in the conspiracy theory or the cock-up theory of history, but an important report from the Department of Employment arrived just hours after the Select Committee had had its last meeting. That report was on the clothing industry, and it showed, from an examination by me of the figures, 50,000 job losses. That is significant because the report itemised the big rundown in employment in that industry in the last 30 years. Jobs dropped from over 500,000 to about 250,000, and 50,000 of those were lost because of minimum wage legislation.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Did the report to which the hon. Gentleman is referring add that the wages in the industry had gone down by 20 per cent. over the same period?

Mr. Thurnham: The principal point was that the wages of people starting in the industry, including youngsters, had been pitched at such a level that the industry could not train people to take the places of those who were leaving. In my constituency there is a shortage of skilled machinists because there is no incentive for employers to train people in such skills.

The Select Committee missed another important document. That was a report by Dr. Stanley Seibert of Birmingham university which showed that as many as 230,000 job losses could be attributed to minimum wages legislation for youths.

The Select Committee's report is disdainful about the figures for job losses and speaks at one point of "only 25,000 jobs" having been lost. Even 25,000 must be worth concern. After all, who would like to choose the 25,000 people involved? Even the Labour party's economist, Neuburger, referred to "only 8,000 job losses." Who on the Opposition Benches would care to name those 8,000 people?

Mr. Prescott: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that unemployment in Britain has increased by 4,000 a week and that he has regularly voted for the policies that have brought that about?

Mr. Thurnham: Unemployment in Britain has resulted from mistaken policies over many years — *[Interruption.]*—policies which have been followed by the Labour party and which are still advocated by Labour Members.

The third item which, unfortunately, the Select Committee did not examine was the report by the Minister for Health and Social Security this week in which he makes interesting proposals for the reform of the welfare state, including the new family credit scheme. That scheme finally makes wages councils totally obsolete.

Wages councils were introduced for three reasons— wages, hours, and unsanitary conditions. Unsanitary conditions have been dealt with by health and safety legislation; hours are no longer a problem because most of the people are part-time workers; and wages will now be taken care of by the family credit scheme proposals, which are excellent and which will cover what people want. People want a good take-home pay. They do not want legislation for a wage that employers cannot afford to pay from which massive deductions are made to cover the cost of payments to the unemployed which are caused by a ridiculous policy.

What is the problem? We want to see the unemployed back at work. If 200,000 extra jobs are possible, what is

holding them up? I think that there is a conspiracy between the employed and the unemployed fed by fears fostered by the Opposition that there will be wage cuts. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said that there would be wage cuts. That demonstrates her misunderstanding, because there will be no proposed wage cuts.

Mr. Baldry: Does my hon. Friend think that bodies such as the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, which represents many employers, are part of the conspiracy?

Mr. Thurnham: It is cosy to be able to get together with other employers and keep the current wages and to say that it does not matter about the unemployed because they do not come into the argument. That is a nice little restrictive practice.

Mr. Jim Lester: It seems unfair that in every sector any employer can pay what he will and the family's wages are made up by the taxpayer. It is a question of employers who seek to pay as little as possible knowing that the wages of family workers will be made up. That does not apply to women workers or young workers. That is an unfair way of treating the taxpayer.

Mr. Thurnham: If my hon. Friend looks at the booklets produced this week, he will see that what will happen is that take-home pay will increase with gross pay. If someone is paid more by his employer, he will have more to take home and he will not be interested in employers paying less. That should not apply in any case.

The fear has existed since the measure was introduced in 1909 when the welfare state did not offer protection. The Under-Secretary of State is not here tonight because he is in Geneva — I hope doing a good job. In the middle of the night in our previous debate he said that if the wages councils were to be totally abolished

"I have no doubt that some people would find themselves, at least temporarily, in circumstances which would be difficult to defend."—[*Official Report*, 26 March 1985; Vol. 76, c. 416.]

I have asked myself what he meant by that, and it crossed my mind that he might have been thinking of the wages councils' inspectors themselves. I accept that other employment would have to be found for them. However, perhaps my hon. Friend was thinking of people who might have their wages cut, but I do not understand that. In manufacturing industries wages are determined by the prices of the goods produced based upon world markets, and employers will compete among themselves to set the wages of people who can work profitably. There will not be any wage cuts for people who are occupied in profitable manufacturing industries.

The service industries are not the same, because world prices do not apply, but employees still have the protection of their employment contract. After two years their wages cannot be cut. That would mean constructive dismissal, so I do not see how people's wages will suddenly be cut. We are talking not about cutting wages but about bringing in people lower down the ladder of earnings opportunities. I do not see why we should take away the bottom rungs. People on the bottom rungs will not affect the wages of those on the higher rungs who have the skills to command higher wages. Average wages might come down but there is no reason to believe that people working in the service industries should suddenly have their wages reduced. Obviously, by mutual agreement their wages could be reduced.

I find it most difficult to defend the circumstances of workers who have no mutual agreement and who lose their jobs through redundancies. About 250,000 jobs in the clothing industries have been lost. I find that difficult to defend.

Hon. Members talk about reform and say that youngsters set their own wages to keep a semblance of the wages councils. What happens when someone is 21 years of age? The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) talked about redundancy at 21. That is ridiculous. He suggests that the person of 21 should be told that Parliament has legislated that he must now have protection and that that means that he must be made redundant. We talk about protection of wage levels, but not about the protection of the job itself.

I am in favour of the protection of the unemployed against obsolete laws which can stop people starting work on the bottom rung of the ladder. What is the point of being on the dole and without a job? Everybody should be able to start a job at whatever wages they can command. I believe that the unskilled should be protected so that they can gain skills. If someone is taken on at too high a wage, what incentive has he to gain extra skills? They must be given the incentive to improve their skills and the employer must find the means to train people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): My hon. Friend has been generous in giving way, unlike the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). In the course of his deliberations in the Select Committee, did he come across the document produced by the TUC which states:

"There must obviously be some truth in the proposition that, all other things being equal, an individual employer will tend to employ more people if wages are lower and fewer people if wages are higher"?

If my hon. Friend has a copy of that document, perhaps he will give it to the hon. Member for Ladywood.

Mr. Thurnham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend—that is exactly it. When talking about the national minimum wage, the Opposition do not seem to be able to make up their mind whether they want a national minimum wage. The document "In Place of Strife" was put down by people who thought that they knew better. That is probably the main reason for today's unemployment. The Department of Employment was commissioned in 1969 to produce a document on a national minimum wage. Paragraph 186 of that document states the effect on employment. It states that the national minimum wage would increase the level of unemployment, and that the worst impact would fall on the less prosperous areas, including the development areas; Northern Ireland could be particularly affected. That is why there was no minimum wage legislation in 1969. That is why the Opposition play around with the words and go no further.

I am grateful for the opportunity to make points which were not included in the Select Committee report. I am learning at every stage. In future when I have differences with a Chairman I shall be able to include my points in the report. I am all in favour of proposals which ensure that people have a proper take-home pay, but I am totally opposed to legislation which tells the employer what he should pay at such a level that the employer cannot pay it, and therefore cannot provide the job.

8.39 pm

Miss Joan Maynard (Sheffield, Brightside): Wages councils exist to protect those who cannot protect

[Miss Joan Maynard]

themselves because they are not unionised to give them real strength. Because they are not strongly organised in their appropriate trades unions, they rely on the law and the inspectorate to enforce their wages. That is always a dicey business under capitalism. It is clear that a Tory Government can always pull away the prop, which is what this Tory Government propose to do in pursuit of their policy of driving down wages. They have created mass unemployment as a strong stick with which to beat the workers. They brought in the youth training scheme with low remuneration, and now propose to extend it.

The introduction of Sunday trading is part of the strategy of driving down wages. It will mean more part-timers on lower rates, although God knows that part-time working on lower rates has already vastly increased. There is nothing wrong with part-time work, provided that the hourly rates and conditions are the same as those for full-time work. Indeed, there are many arguments in favour of part-time work. However, the truth is that part-timers are paid lower hourly rates and usually have worse conditions than full-time workers.

Doing away with wages councils — which the Opposition will certainly resist — will not only drive wage rates which are already too low even lower, but will bring back sweated labour. Talk about Victorian values —they will be with us with a vengeance.

The consultative document claims that wages councils' orders are difficult to understand. Of course, there are none so dense as those who do not want to understand. It is alleged that the difficulty in understanding the orders is one reason for underpayment. If people believe that, they will believe anything. There must be few employers who fail to obtain the grants to which they are entitled because they do not understand the regulations. The wages inspectorate continually report flagrant violations of wages board orders. Therefore, there is a case for more enforcement, not less. Few union members and no officials have difficulty in interpreting the orders.

It is argued that more jobs would be created if wages were lower. I want to re-emphasise the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food analysed the impact of the minimum wage for farm workers, and the report concluded that increases in the value of the minimum wage

"increased both the demand for, and the supply of, labour and hence employment."

Ministers have found themselves arguing the case for abolition of wages councils against mounting opposition from public opinion, employers and some of their own Back Benchers as well as trade unions and the poverty lobby. The weight of evidence is that abolishing the councils or rendering them ineffective would have little or no effect on unemployment.

In the absence of credible evidence beyond unsubstantiated anecdotes, the Department of Employment appears to have tried to cover Ministers' embarrassment with spurious and misleading claims for the likely effects of abolition. It is now time for the Government to admit that the king really has no clothes.

Ministers have given no estimate of the increase in jobs likely to flow from the abolition of wages councils. When pressed to do so in relation to young people, they were unable to produce any figures or evidence. Paragraph 11 of the consultative paper claims that the wages set by the councils make it more difficult for those who wish to take up employment to do so. That is absurd because paragraph 7 notes that the minimum rates range from £63 to £72 a week, which respectively are 41 per cent. and 46 per cent. of national average earnings.

The majority of employees covered by wages councils are women, and their average earnings hover around 53 per cent. of national average earnings. Therefore, women will suffer from any abolition of wages councils. The fact that 37 per cent. of workers covered by wages councils are paid the minimum only does not support the argument that rates are too high. Indeed, as has been made clear in many inspectorate reports, it suggests that underpayment is rife.

My union, the Transport and General Workers Union, will continue to fight for low-paid workers, including farm workers, regardless of the fate of wages councils. Our principal interest is in the agricultural wages board. We are especially concerned about the consultative paper's attack on younger workers aged 18 or under. We appreciate that that could so easily be read into the agricultural wages board provisions.

We see the attack on wages councils as a veiled attack on the wages board, and we shall certainly resist any such attack, as we resist the attack on wages councils. I make it clear that we shall also resist the so-called reforms, because I believe that they will be almost as bad as abolition.

8.47 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): All that we have heard from Opposition Members so far has had an element of unreality. No one has yet used the words "employer" and "customer". They ignore the fact that it is the employer who pays the wages. If wages councils regularly award unrealistic rates, employers will not be able to pay them and firms will go out of business. The employer will become unemployed, as will the employee. I should have thought that Opposition Members would have been only too anxious to direct their minds to that.

Everyone in this House is greatly concerned about unemployment. None profess to be more concerned than Opposition Members. It is therefore surprising that they do not understand that wages councils are a straitjacket on employer and employee alike.

Reference has been made to youth unemployment. The effects of wages councils' demands in that area are so obvious that I am surprised that anyone feels able to stand up and justify them.

I want to concentrate my few remarks on wages councils generally. The rigidity of some of their awards prevents the development of sensible wage structures and systems of remuneration tailored to the needs of industry and business. Wages councils concern themselves not only with pay—if they did, perhaps there might be a little more justification for them—but with hours of work, holidays, part-time working, overtime wage rates and a host of things that sensible employers and employees in other businesses and industries not covered by wages councils manage to settle by themselves.

In today's highly competitive world, businesses will fail unless they can make sensible and realistic forward planning forecasts. Few businesses can organise themselves and settle the difference between a profit and a loss without knowing precisely what their overheads will be during the next 12 months.

The biggest question mark against any employer's forecast is labour costs. It is a crucial factor. The fact that that should be decided by other people, many of whom have no direct business experience whatever, and without regard to whether that business will continue profitably, is tying the business man's hands behind his back. Nor is it any more satisfactory for the person who is employed. An able worker with years of seniority and experience finds his wage differentials annually eroded as a result of these awards, particularly to young workers, to the point where seniority and responsibility are counted as of little worth and there is no incentive left to achieve either.

It is essential that there should be economic recovery. That could be achieved by more flexible hours and by encouraging efficient, low cost businesses which can compete with foreign competition. It is a truism that the new small businesses of today will be the big businesses of tomorrow. If their growth is stunted at this stage, we shall do no service to employment prospects.

Since the recession, more and more small business employers have had to pay themselves less and less in order to satisfy the ever increasing and ever more unrealistic requirements of the wages councils. The uncertainty of those awards—the fact that they can be backdated — is a terrifying prospect for the small employer who has limited capital. These requirements are a very large factor for an employer in deciding whether he can afford to take on extra staff. In practice, each new wages council award has meant a cut in the hours that an employee may work. The corollary is an increase in the hours that the employer has to work if he wishes to stay in business. When the Opposition hear of businesses failing, they are the first to say that it is the Prime Minister's policies that are creating unemployment. They never consider that it might be the result of the unfeeling, appalling bureaucracy which is interfering with the day-to-day operations of businesses which are trying to do their best.

We are still one of the least efficient industrial nations. We still pay more but produce less than most of our competitors. The essential problem of keeping costs down in order to remain in business does not concern the wages councils and the academics who serve on them. The fringe benefits that they award become more and more unreasonable every year — for example, increased holiday allowances for workers who may work for only two days a week or who may even work from home.

The contact with reality of many who serve on wages councils is tenuous. Wages councils were formed to protect those who work in small enterprises where at one time union organisation was impracticable. In industries where there are unions a settlement is reached between management and union, but that does not happen in industries which are covered by wages councils.

Wages councils are answerable to nobody — not to employers, to employees, or to this House. Working in their ivory towers, the only jobs that they protect are their own. If they succeed in raising wage levels beyond what the market will bear, employers will be unable to continue profitably in business. Wages councils will harm the ability of employers to provide better working conditions and fringe benefits. They are costly and expensive items in the day-to-day business of any employer.

In any group of people there are variations in ability, self-confidence, application and usefulness to the employer. If the cost of offering work constantly goes up, the less able and useful will suffer. Those who are highly skilled will get the jobs. If wages councils continue in existence, the less able will be permanently barred from having the chance of a job. The abolition of wages councils would not entirely solve our unemployment problem, but would help to solve it. It would bring greater flexibility to the labour market. The wages councils would cease to do a job which ought to be done by the social services.

8.56 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The abolition of the wages councils would discriminate against women, because a high proportion of women are covered by them. Their abolition would also increase the amount of racial discrimination against the black community. There is also a regional dimension to this problem. The economies of Northern England, Wales and Scotland are already low-wage economies. If it were true that low wages created jobs, the boom areas would be the low-wage economy areas, but that is not the case. The low-wage economy areas are also the high unemployment black spots. Far from employment being created by low wages, unemployment is to be found alongside stagnant wages levels and low productivity.

The Government have not produced figures that show the number of workers who are covered by wages councils in Wales. When I asked the Secretary of State about the number of jobs that would be created by the abolition of the wages councils, he was unable to produce any figures. Eight thousand jobs in Wales could be created over five years. This would be one twelfth of the jobs lost in Wales since 1979. As a proportion, this would produce perhaps 500 jobs in Wales.

The Government's monetarist policies are creating unemployment. The decision to abolish the wages councils is a product of supply side fanaticism, but it is the fall in the aggregate demand in the economy caused by monetarism which is the cause of unemployment. The supply siders believe that the poor and the unemployed cause unemployment by pricing themselves out of jobs and that if the wages councils are abolished wages will be cut and more jobs created. This fantasy is deliberately nurtured by the Government to obscure their intentions.

When we debate the substantive legislation, I hope that this debate will herald a major campaign throughout Britain, particularly in the industrial sectors which already suffer from depressed wage levels and in the regions where for [illegible] there have been low-wage, depressed economies. We must mount an effective campaign against these sexist, racist, anti-working class proposals.

8.58 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): I rise to speak in support of wages councils, but perhaps in company that I did not anticipate. I shall still speak in favour of them, but not with the same fervour or with the same views as Opposition Members. The case that could be made in support of them has been overshadowed by strong political rhetoric and by claims that cannot be justified.

At present there are 26 wages councils, which represent about 2·75 million people. However, seven of them represent as many as 2,600,000 people. Thus there are two different types of wages council. A small group of them represent the majority, and many smaller wages councils represent a wide range of other employees. That is why

[Mr. Lewis Stevens]

there is a need for reform. Hon. Members should bear in mind that two thirds of the units involved employ fewer than 10 people. Consequently, wages councils, which are very rigid and have many rules, do not give many of the small employers any opportunity to understand their real purpose. I believe that wages councils should be restricted to looking at the basic wages of adult employees and some of their basic conditions.

However, it is too easy to say that all young people have priced themselves out of work. In general, they have not done so. At present, wages councils set the adult rate. Many of the industries that are covered employ people who need comparatively little training before they can achieve a reasonable rate of work. That level is rightly, in some cases, set at 18 or 19 years of age, and that is only sensible.

However, industries gradually change. Demand changes, and consequently there are manufacturing and technological changes which may mean that wages councils have to be more flexible in their approach. However, the argument that young people price themselves out of jobs is no more true than the argument that low wages automatically lead to greater benefits, more jobs. It is true that higher wage rates can price people out of work, but the converse is not automatically true. In some areas, exploitation already exists. Inspectors have already reported on cases of people being underpaid. Sometimes that is accidental, but sometimes it is not. If we remove all regulation, that exploitation will increase —perhaps not greatly but sufficiently.

Many of the 2·75 million people covered by wages councils are already subject to various collective bargaining arrangements within their industries. Thus, fewer than 2·75 million people are genuinely dependent on the results achieved by wages councils. I do not think we can risk removing all such regulation in anticipation of the fact that more competition at the bottom will lead to genuine benefits. When young people have achieved a certain level, they should be paid the rate for the job, but until then they cannot expect anywhere near the full rate. It is productivity that matters. The employer must see a return, because otherwise he will ask himself whether it is worth employing a person at a certain rate. If an employer is not obtaining £62 worth of work, it is not economical for him to pay that rate.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The hon. Gentleman has made several valuable points, but is there not a danger in trying to explain all pay levels by productivity levels? Agriculture is a high productivity industry, but the wage rates are low.

Mr. Stevens: I accept that one cannot pursue that argument to its end. However, the difference between employing and not employing people must depend to some extent on how much work is done. For example, in the case of certain shop jobs, there must be a time when people are not fully employed as otherwise they could not be brought in to deal with big queues.

I support wages councils. I hope that they will not be abolished and that we shall continue to give them a valuable role to play. However, there is a tremendous need for them to be reformed. Much of the bureaucracy that goes with them is not acceptable to many small businesses. The value of wages councils is not recognised, so they are not used and therefore they cannot help the people whom they are there to protect. The most worthwile thing that we do is reform the councils, streamline them, make them more efficient and reduce the bureaucracy while keeping the basic regulations of protection for the ordinary working people.

9.5 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): This debate arises out of what was described by the Chancellor of the Exchequer as a Budget for jobs. In reality, the purpose of the measure, announced in that Budget, of which the abolition, or changing the structure, of wages councils is but one, was to provide a sweatshop Budget, designed to produce low wages. That is in line with the Tory Government's philosophy. Over the past six years, they have used mass unemployment in an attempt to cower the trade union movement, to limit wage rises and to reduce the direct and indirect wages paid to working people.

The employers and the industrialists whom the Tory Government represent, having failed to invest in new machinery in the past 30 years, and having realised that they have lost world markets and are now losing their share of the domestic markets whether in fridges, vehicles, televisions, radios or textiles, are cutting the share of wealth that goes to working people to restore or enhance their profit levels. They are cutting direct wages or, through the Government, cutting the social wages of education, housing and other social services. The threat is now extended to the wages councils.

The wages councils cover almost 3 million workers in shops, hairdressing, clothing, catering and hotels. Significantly, despite what Tory Members have said, the wages councils do not cover manufacturing or the export industry. Therefore, the Tory Government's logic—that cutting wages for those covered by wages councils will help the British capitalist economy—is spurious. It will only increase the number of workers who have to survive on poverty wages.

That 3 million is part of an army of 8·5 million workers living on or below the poverty line. One third of the workforce is living on a financial tightrope and the abolition of the wage councils would shred it. We are talking about wages of £60 or £70 a week. How can Tory Members understand what it is like to live on such a wage when for many of them it is the price of a week's gin and tonics in the Bar or Banqueting Rooms?

The Tories have argued in this debate and elsewhere that the wages councils price workers out of jobs. We have had that tonight from a Member of Parliament who has seven jobs. Where is his evidence? In the past 10 years, wages council rates as a percentage of average wages have fallen from 73 per cent. to 65 per cent., but unemployment has rocketed. Tory Ministers and the Secretary of State have argued that YTS youngsters on £26 a week, hairdressers on £45 a week, check-out lasses and lads on £69 a week are getting too much.

If high wage increases automatically lead to a destruction of jobs, why is there no condemnation from the Tory party of the chairman of ICI, who took a 63 per cent. increase in his wages last year? The *Financial Times* commented that, compared with some company chairmen, he is a pauper. He is on only £171,000 a year—£3,300 a week. Why is there no condemnation for the chairman of the British Oxygen Company, on £13,000 a week for selling fresh air? Why is there no condemnation of Cabinet

Ministers, who gave themselves a 9·4 per cent. increase last year or of company directors with an 11 per cent. increase?

Under the Tory Government, the number of millionaires has doubled to over 8,000. Over 1 million people now earn over £20,000 a year. How many jobs of ordinary working people have been destroyed by those high salaries? According to the register of Members' interests, many Tory Members cannot survive on the salary for an MP. They have to have five, 10 or 15 jobs. The argument that wages of £60 or £70 per week authorised by wages councils destroy jobs is obviously rubbish in the light of what some Tory Members are getting. The argument of the Tories could be summed up by saying that the poor are not yet poor enough for unemployment to fall and the rich are not yet rich enough for investment in industry to take place.

Mr. Thurnham *rose*——

Mr. Nellist: Because of the time, I am not giving way.

We on these Benches oppose the abolition of wages councils because the Labour party is against low pay. I have a private Member's Bill before the House which expresses TUC and Labour party policy. I hope that it will be implemented speedily by the next Labour Government to provide a national minimum wage for £115 per week for all workers for a maximum 35 hour week; that wage would start at the age of 18. There should be a pro rata wage for part-timers and increases should be linked to inflation. For 16-year-olds the rate should be 75 per cent. of the adult rate and for 17-year-olds it should be 85 per cent. For those in Government training schemes, no one should receive less than the £55 per week that a trade union member would get.

We are arguing not just against the abolition of wages councils but in favour of a campaign by the trade union movement to get the 3 million workers covered by wages councils into trade union membership so that we may fight for the enhancement of their conditions.

Wages councils are by no means perfect. In 1983 the wages council inspectors visited 23,000 work places. In 9,000 cases employees were being illegally underpaid, but there were only seven prosecutions. In 1984 there were two prosecutions. We have in government the so-called party of law and order, the Tory party. When the Tory Government see evidence of massive avoidance of the law in regard to the payment of wages, do they strengthen the wages inspectorate? No; they cut its number by one third. Do they give the inspectors more tools to do their job? No; they restrict their activities by reducing the miles they are allowed to travel. They change the law to allow their friends off the hook.

If wages councils were to be abolished, it would be a direct attack on women and young workers. Four fifths of all workers covered by wages councils are women, and one in five of all young workers are covered. The Secretary of State said that wages councils price young people out of jobs. Even the consultative document on which the debate arises says:

"there is a growing body of evidence that the employment prospects of young people are adversely affected by the level of their pay relative to adults."

What evidence exists for that? Youth wages have fallen sharply over the last six years. Relative to adult rates, wages for boys are 8 per cent. lower and for girls 12 per cent. lower than they were five years ago. Yet youth unemployment has trebled.

What sort of conditions are the young people working in? Just under two weeks ago I had an article in a magazine called "Just 17". As a result of that article over 80 girls aged 16 to 20 have written to tell me about their employers. *[Interruption.]* That seems to provoke laughter on the Tory Benches. I heard about a 19-year-old in the Black Country who is working for a stockbroker who no doubt has many friends on the Tory Benches. She is working from 9 am to 5.15 pm. During the three months she was training she received £30 per week. Now she has been taken on permanently at £32·50 per week.

I heard from another young girl who was lured to Devon to work in a shop by a bloke who promised her a flat and wages of £50 per week plus commission. Now she finds that she is working seven days a week from 10 in the morning until 9 at night. For all those hours she gets £10 per week plus her board. She is to get commission only if the shop takes over £400 per week, but while she has been there the takings have never been more than £200 per week. I heard from another young girl in Rhyl in Clwyd who is working alongside someone who receives £78·50 per week as a typist; she is on YTS and is getting £26·50 for doing the same job.

Have those wage rates created massive increases in new jobs for young people, as the Tories have said tonight and in previous arguments? Earlier today in business questions, I gave some figures showing the true picture of youth unemployment now. Fourty-six per cent. of all England's careers offices have 10 or fewer vacancies for this year's school leavers. Ninety-four per cent. of Scottish careers offices and 95 per cent. of Welsh careers offices have 10 or fewer vacancies. Five hundred and seventeen thousand people will leave school this summer. Fifty-one careers offices do not have a single job available. Another 36 have only one job. Those 517,000 school leavers are chasing 12,355 vacancies—42 kids to every vacancy. In England the figure is 37 to one, in Wales it is 129 to one and in Scotland it is 144 to one.

In only two places in Wales, Cardiff and Shotton, are there more than 10 jobs for the school leavers. Some 40 offices in Wales have fewer than 10 vacancies. In only five places in Scotland are there more than 10 jobs for school leavers. The statistics go on and on.

Mr. Evans: Will my hon. Friend confirm that in Brecon and Radnor, where an important election is due to take place, young people are doing very well because there are 10 vacancies at their centre?

Mr. Nellist: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. In Wales, Brecon is one of the four offices with 10 or more vacancies. It just gets itself into double figures for the hundreds, if not thousands, of school leavers chasing those vacancies.

The British capitalist economy under this Tory Government is in tatters. Some 5 million people are denied the right to a job. Some 6 million live in damp houses and 8·5 million live on poverty wages. The Government come forward with the idea of reducing the wages of people on £60 or £70 a week, claiming that there is not enough money in the economy to pay decent wage rates. Under this Government, over £50,000 million has left this country in the past four or five years and gone to the real

[Mr. Nellist]

low-wage economies of South Africa, Korea, Brazil and Argentina, where the wage rates are kept low at the barrel of a gun often of a military police dictatorship. That is what is at the back of the minds of some Tory Members. They want to emulate the wage rates and conditions in Singapore, Bangkok or Bangladesh to compete with the textile manufacturers of those far eastern countries, affecting the young workers and women in those industries in this country.

We are against the abolition of wages councils. We are even more interested in getting rid of this Tory Government and giving every worker a more decent week's wage for his job than he receives now.

9.13 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Few hon. Members can have a constituency with more workers who are under the auspices of wages councils than mine. In Bournemouth, many workers are in the leisure, hotel, catering and retail industries. In fact, they are the backbone of employment in that town. Since I was elected I have been inundated with complaints about wages councils, and nearly all the employers in my constituency would like to see them abolished.

Mr. Evans: What about the employees?

Mr. Butterfill: It was not unnatural that I approached the matter with that view. There is no doubt that if we were to abolish wages councils there would be a considerable improvement in employment. Indeed, all the academic studies that I have seen show that to be the case.

Mr. Evans: Which ones?

Mr. Butterfill: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman which ones. The study giving the lowest figure comes from Henry Neuburger, who I believe is employed by the Labour party. In the Low Pay Unit report of 1984 he suggested that here would be 8,000 new jobs if the wages councils were abolished. The highest figure that I have seen is in the study by Dr. Stanley Siebert who suggested in 1985 that there would be 230,000 more jobs. A study by the Department of Employment last month suggested that there would be 50,000 more jobs. I do not know which of those figures is right.

Mr. Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Butterfill: No, I do not have time to give way.

Whichever figure is correct, surely those jobs are worth having. There has been an enormous volume of representation to the Government and also to me because I have taken a particular interest in this as secretary of my party's sub-committee on tourism. Many employers, the Institute of Directors, the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses and the CBI have all made representations urging us to proceed with abolition. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) said that the CBI did not favour abolition, but its parliamentary brief for this debate states in capital letters:

"Each wages council should be abolished unless employers make a substantial case for its continuation."

Mr. Evans: What about employees?

Mr. Butterfill: Many other employers have suggested reform rather than abolition, including the Institute of Personnel Management, ACAS and the National Chamber of Trade. The Auld committee, too, recommended reform rather than abolition. Given the differing views, the Government are right to say that there should be a considerable period of consultation before any decision is made.

If wages councils are retained, there must be substantial reforms.

Mr. Evans: To strengthen them.

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Member for Truro referred to the ridiculous position of young workers. Young and inexperienced people are automatically paid the same as more experienced workers. That is not the situation in Holland, Denmark or Germany. Protection for young workers should be either abolished or subject to graduated stages up to the age of, say, 23 as in Holland.

I am also concerned about the rules for Sunday working. If, as it seems, we are to proceed with Sunday trading there will be considerable problems, as there are already in Scotland. It is ludicrous to insist on payment at double time for Sunday working. If there is any differential at all, it should not be more than time and a half for Sunday working.

There is also considerable concern about the independent members of the councils. That, too, must be urgently considered if reform is to take place.

The scope of the wages councils should be strictly limited to minimum wage levels. Very small firms with, say, fewer than five members should be excluded. Larger firms with existing trade union agreements or satisfactory collective bargaining agreements of other kinds should be allowed to come out of wages councils because they are adequately protected already.

To do all that, it may be necessary to repudiate ILO convention No. 26. If that is necessary, the Government should do so.

9.24 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): As my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) and others have said, two options were placed before us in the Government's consultative document. They are that we should abolish the wages councils, as stated in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget speech, or that we should reform them. No hon. Member who believes that wages councils have an important part to play, as I and my right hon. and hon. Friends do, would deny that progressive action for reform would be welcome. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), in a debate on 15 February 1984, said, on behalf of the Labour party, that wages councils should be changed in some respects.

There are many ways in which the effect of the wages councils could be strengthened, and perhaps some of the worst aspects of what they do to small businesses could be limited. Assistance could be channelled more effectively towards the most vulnerable. The observance of statutory minimum rates could be better policed. We could encourage more dialogue between both sides who sit on the councils, and it may be essential to lessen the burdens placed on small firms by the wages councils. For instance, the time lag between giving decisions and their being implemented could be shortened.

If the Government produced a genuine package of reforms aimed at some or all of those objectives, we would have to consider them constructively. But the central issue

is either abolition or emasculation in the guise of reform. Wages councils are not necessarily the best way to protect the low-paid, but there is no doubt about the need for some mechanism for such protection. At present, the wages councils are all that we have.

The abolition of wages councils would be an act of pure ideology unsupported by the facts now available to us. We have heard arguments from the Secretary of State and from Conservative Members that their abolition or emasculation would increase employment. But where is the evidence for that? The largest industry covered by a wages council—the clothing industry—together with the retailing and catering industries, represent 90·3 per cent. of all employees who are protected by wages councils. Between 1950 and the late 1970s, wages in the clothing industry decreased by 20 per cent. compared with average wages, and at the same time employment was halved. There is no evidence that a reduction in wages causes increased employment. In the other direction, I note that a 1982 report from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food stated that increases in average earnings appeared in that industry

"to have increased both demand for and supply of labour, hence employment."

The Department of Employment's in-house employment market research unit has produced evidence that points in the other direction, but, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said, the Low Pay Unit has completely discredited that research. It employed many unscientific statistics for its conclusions, and even included the footwear industry, which is not covered by a wages council. Many believe that that research was slanted to support some previously chosen prejudices.

The matter is brought into clear relief by the Government, whose senior members seem completely unconvinced of the fact that the abolition of the wages councils will have no effect on employment. One need look no further than the speech made in April 1984 by the chairman of the Conservative party. He said:

"It is not possible to estimate in any precise way how employment might be affected if wages councils were abolished." —[*Official Report*, 11 April 1984; Vol. 58, c. 255.]

There we have it. There is the admission that the Government at the most senior level are not convinced that the abolition of the wages councils would have any effect on employment. Clearly revealed in that statement is the idea that this has been done for ideological purposes.

If the wages councils go, we shall see the end of organisations which provide safeguards for 2·7 million people. In no sense can it be said that they provide high wages. In some areas—for example, hairdressing—the rates are as low as £1·18 per hour. Such wages are set at 25 per cent. of average earnings. Can it really be countenanced that those wages should be allowed to fall even lower? Is it really proposed that, with benefit to the economy and without exploitation of the people concerned, such wages should fall lower than that level?

If one extrapolates the 1983 checking figures, it can be seen that there may be as many as 170,000 people who are underpaid. It will also be discovered from the 1983 survey that the amounts of underpayment are not insignificant. Indeed, it appears that on average each employee was underpaid by about £118.

We would lose a structure which all too inadequately limits exploitation. Do the Government say that there is no wage exploitation? Surely they cannot be so blind. If wages councils are abolished, how will they safeguard those who are vulnerable to low wage exploitation, or do they intend that there should be no such safeguards—that they do not intend to safeguard the wages of those earning as little as £1·18 an hour? As my hon. Friend the Member for Truro said, do they intend to abandon a safeguard which as a civilised society we have accepted for nigh on 80 years? Is that what they mean by returning to Victorian values and Victorian practices?

There is no doubt that wages councils perform an important function. They are part of a civilised society. They safeguard the wages of those who are vulnerable to wage exploitation. They provide a mechanism which protects employers as well as employees from unfair competition based on wage undercutting. That is undoubtedly one of the reasons why many employers welcome their existence. They provide a framework within which orderly industrial relations and a voluntary collective bargaining system can operate.

There is no evidence that the abolition or the emasculation of wages councils would produce anything but the most insignificant increase in employment. Is the questionable gaining of that worth so much sacrifice? The answer must be, "No". If the Government go for such substantial reform as will further weaken the powers and effectiveness of the wages councils, we shall see the triumph of prejudice over the facts, the triumph of dogma over compassion and the triumph of ideology over common sense and common humanity. Let the Government now announce that they do not intend either the abolition or the emasculation of the wages councils. If they fail to do so, let those Conservative Members who believe that wages councils have a part to play—I know that there are some—vote for our motion tonight.

9.34 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): We have had a debate in which the arguments for and against wages councils have been wide ranging, and the strong feelings on both sides of the House about this issue have been put on the record. However, one voice has been notable by its absence. When I picked up the *Daily Telegraph* this morning—which I do not normally do with any great enthusiasm—I was pleased to find that the Conservative Centre Forward group had chosen its four priority issues which it intends to press in the House over the coming months. They are unemployment, the reform of the welfare state, the financing and organisation of local government, and the future of wages councils. The House will confirm that, despite that announcement, not one voice from that group has defended wages councils today.

Another group, which might have been associated with the Centre Forward group, has also been missing today—the majority of those who supported the Employment Select Committee's report which recommended that wages councils should be supported. Three of the four members of that Committee who voted for the report are Conservatives. Unfortunately, we have had no speech supporting the Committee's report from the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), the hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) or the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock). We shall be interested to see whether they support their views later today.

Mr. Butterfill *rose*——

Mr. Wrigglesworth: It is most regrettable that those voices have been absent from the debate.

The Government have brought wages councils into the firing line because of their desire to divert attention away from the failure of their other policies on unemployment. They have tried to give the impression that abolition of wages councils will in some way which has not been proved today or elsewhere overcome unemployment. Indeed, they have tried to give the impression that the very existence of wages councils is a major reason for high unemployment. One need only consider the activities covered by wages councils to see what palpable nonsense that is.

Two thirds of employees covered by wages councils work part-time and four fifths of them are female. The majority are covered by just six wages councils concerned with hairdressing, hotels, restaurants and the retail trades. The Secretary of State and his colleagues constantly tell us they are areas of expanding employment and, in many cases, increased efficiency and considerable success. Indeed, all the forecasts suggest that they will continue to prosper. One can hardly suggest that restaurants and retail trades are not expanding or that they are being restrained by wages councils. We have only to consider the extension of chains such as McDonalds, ASDA and Sainsburys to see that activity is not restrained by wages councils.

It is unfortunate that, in the Budget, the Government tried to parade wages councils as one of the causes of high unemployment and suggested that their abolition would reduce unemployment. We have had a useful discussion about the reform of wages councils. Some useful reforms on simplification and on the pay structure laid down by the wages councils could be introduced. We accept that, but unfortunately the debate has not predominantly been about that. The Select Committee members examined this aspect as dispassionately as we would expect. There is no clear evidence to support the employment claims put forward by those who advocate abolition.

Various pieces of evidence have been bandied about. For every piece of evidence that demonstrates that employment increases if wages councils are abolished, there is another to show the opposite.

Mr. Evans: Anecdotes.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Much of that evidence is anecdotal. The report on clothing also dealt with the footwear industry, which is not covered by a wages council. Conservative Members should refer to the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) who, for many years, has argued for the textile industry as vociferously as anyone. The wages councils have not been the cause of the problems in the clothing industry. Management, lack of investment, poor marketing, design and product development and international trade have affected the industry. The Labour Government and the present Government have been criticised by hon. Members on both sides of the House for not acting more stringently to protect our home industry from unfair imports. Those factors have given rise to the loss of employment in the clothing industry much more than the marginal effect of wages councils.

Hon. Members cannot rest upon that case to claim that wages councils should be abolished. No case has been proved during this debate or in evidence to the Select Committee showing that there is an employment case for abolishing the wages councils. The overwhelming case for the retention of the wages councils is based on the argument for equity and for protecting the most vulnerable people within our society.

What do the Government seek to do in relation to pay? In recent years, one of the divides between the two sides of the House — all Opposition parties and the Government — has concerned pay and productivity. Members on the Government Benches seem hell-bent on bringing about a low-pay, low-productivity economy, whereas Members on the Labour and alliance Benches want a high-pay, high-productivity economy, which they know is the only solution to our long-term problems and the only hope of beating overseas competition and having low unemployment in the future. The two major industrial countries that have succeeded so much where we have failed are Germany and Japan. In Japan especially pay and productivity have been rapidly increasing. The Japanese have succeeded in beating the competition and, therefore, in keeping unemployment low.

Mr. Thurnham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I cannot give way, because my time is limited.

Instead of aiming for the type of economy that exists in Germany and Japan, the Government seem hell-bent on going for a low-pay economy and competing with economies that have low technology, low skill and low education bases. I am sure that the Opposition agree that that is not the direction in which we should move.

The Government are at their weakest in their response to the case for protecting the most vulnerable people—workers who are earning very low rates of pay, between £65 and £72 a week. In some trades such as hairdressing, wages are even lower than that. Those are not the sort of people who are causing problems to the British economy. They are the sort of people who need the protection of this House to ensure that their standards of living are not curtailed even further.

As hon. Members on both sides have said, it is interesting that the wages councils make a contribution to industrial relations. If there is not a collective bargaining system in an industry, the wages councils system provides a framework for an orderly determination of wages and conditions that would otherwise not exist. As the Select Committee pointed out, if the wages councils were abolished, that orderliness would go, and the consequent competition, wage cutting, and worsening in the conditions of workers would be very damaging to industry as a whole and not only to the workers.

Therefore, there is an overwhelming case for retaining the wages councils, albeit with some of the reforms to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) referred when he opened the debate. I hope that, despite the lack of speeches from those Conservative Members who believe that the wages councils should be retained, the Secretary of State will be able to tell the House that, in taking note of the weight of arguments in the debate, he is prepared to give us an early decision that the wages councils will be maintained.

I believe that the Government's policy towards the wages councils is a pathetic and dishonest attempt to divert attention from the failure of their other policies. Today's high unemployment is caused not by the levels of wages

but by the lack of demand within the economy. We made that quite clear to the Government in the Budget debates and in other economic debates in this House.

More and more people are coming to realise that the only way in which we shall be able to cut unemployment is not by tinkering around with bodies such as the wages councils, or with the rates of pay of the lowest paid members of our community, but by changing the Government's economic strategy.

Ministers must not suggest that by dealing with the so-called problem of wages councils they will be able significantly to reduce unemployment from 3¼ million. It has been suggested that the maximum number of people who could be employed as a result of the abolition of the wages councils would be 25,000. That would hardly make any impact on the problem of unemployment, even if that figure could be attained. There is conflicting evidence on that figure in the Select Committee report, and 25,000 is the highest figure that I have seen. It is much more realistic to suggest that, if all the wages councils were abolished, it might result in creating about 8,000 jobs. That has been the number of jobs lost month by month as a result of the Government's economic policies. Why are we wasting all this time, effort and money in investigating the future of the wages councils when the number of jobs that might be created, if the councils were abolished, is so small and puny and would make so little impact on unemployment?

What we are witnessing is a charade in an attempt to divert attention from the high level of unemployment and its true cause—the Government's economic policies. If the Secretary of State were to announce tonight a change in the Government's policy towards the wages councils, he would get much more support than he is likely to get in the Lobbies.

9.50 pm

Mr. Tom King: With the leave of the House, I will respond to the points that have been made in this short debate.

I said in my opening remarks that I appreciated the House having an opportunity to discuss this subject because the consultation period had just ended in terms of the formal public consultation. I said that we had received 667 responses from a range of organisations and individuals. I am, therefore, grateful for the opportunity that has been afforded for hon. Members to make their contributions as well.

Mr. Foot *rose*——

Mr. King: I think that I can answer the right hon. Gentleman, before he has even asked his question, by saying no.

Mr. Foot: I intended to ask——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot have two right hon. Gentlemen on their feet at the same time. Is the Minister giving way?

Mr. Foot: Will the right hon. Gentleman now answer the question that I asked earlier? Are there any objections or support for his view in the representations that he has received?

Mr. King: The consultation paper suggested two alternatives, abolition or reform, and I assure the right hon. Gentleman, as I said in my opening remarks, that there was support for both possibilities.

It would be wrong of me not to say that I have received from some employers' bodies strong arguments for the retention of wages councils. Those bodies have included the Federation of Merchant Tailors, and I feel that I should put that on the record early in my contribution.

The House will have noticed the vigour with which the debate has been conducted and I am under no illusions about the strength of feeling that exists in quarters of the House on this matter. There is a real difference of view. There are those who hold strong views about the present pattern of wages councils, covering an erratic series of shops in the high street. Earlier, I challenged any hon. Member to walk with me down a high street and be able to speak with certainty about which shops were and were not covered by the existing wages councils provisions. That point was clearly recognised by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon).

If I were to take a theme that has carried certain common ground across the Chamber, it would be that there is, without doubt, room for action. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), part of whose speech I missed, referred to the case for sensible reform. The case for reform undoubtedly exists, and we start from that common ground.

I cannot say that I am absolutely sure about the position of certain Labour Members, least of all those on the Labour Front Bench, who would oppose almost any change in any situation, no matter how obvious the case for it. In this situation, however, we have established a case at least for reform, and the argument that we now face is whether it should be reform or abolition.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) is not at present in her place. She referred to a leaked document and she seemed to chase every story on the subject. She referred to the obvious fact that there had been a leaked document on the pressures from senior civil servants unhappy with the policy. That was an unfortunate phrase for her to use. She is in a position to know—because the person concerned is with an organisation with which she is connected—that a document has been removed from my Department.

Sadly, it meant the end of the career of a young junior civil servant because he leaked the document of a senior civil servant, in this case the permanent secretary. I say that only in sorrow, and Opposition Members who gloat with great delight about leaked documents must have regard—*[Interruption.]* This applies particularly to the Labour Member who has aspirations to be in government. He should not gloat too much about the readiness of civil servants to hand out Government documents. If that hon. Member were in a different situation he might not think that to be in the best interests of Government organisation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) was a member of the Select Committee and issued a minority report. He made his arguments clear to the House. The hon. Member for Ladywood promised that her party would fight the proposal all the way, but she cannot bear to be here for the closing speeches. I am sure that there is a reasonable explanation for her absence. I see that she has returned. She makes a late return to the battlefield and we are delighted to welcome her back. Not a single Labour Member of the Select Committee took part in the debate tonight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East emphasised the heart of the issue—employment and jobs. My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West

[Mr. King]

(Mr. Butterfill) made it clear that even the Leader of the Opposition's advisers accepted that extra jobs will result. One can argue about how many extra jobs. That is important, but the key question is about the level of protection—if that protection is necessary for those in work—and about what impact it will have on preventing those out of work from having the chance of a job. Those issues are at the heart of the matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East also raised another matter which I am sure that the House will consider further. He asked what was the relevance of such a form of wage protection in a society in which there might be family credit or some other form of family income support.

I sought earlier to explain the different criteria against which the original trade boards were established and the different categories involved—the long hours and the insanitary nature of the working conditions. They are two of the three criteria on which the trade boards and the wages councils were established. The criteria are dealt with in different legislation and protected in different ways.

I have listened to most of the debate. I shall study all the contributions. After the extensive consultation we shall reach decisions, not because of the vote tonight, but by giving serious consideration to representations. I do not intend to dismiss with contempt, as the motion invites, the 667 responses. They deserve serious consideration.

The Government's amendment makes clear that those representations, with those from hon. Members, from the Select Committee and from the minority report by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East, will be seriously considered. I commend the amendment to the House.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 155, Noes 194.

Division No. 231] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCrea, Rev William
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cartwright and
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael

Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lamont, Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Moate, Roger
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Murphy, Christopher
Newton, Tony
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'lch N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

'That this House notes that the period for consultation on the consultative document on wages councils is only just ending and representations are still being received; and asks the Government to take into account the views of the Employment Committee, together with the very many other responses from interested organisations and individuals.'.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Mr. Speaker: I have to tell the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) that the digital clocks are incorrect, and that he should time his speech on the clocks at the end of the Chamber.

10.15 pm

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): I shall look at the right clock.

The debate on super power nuclear arms control is rarely out of the news, and rightly so. The waste of resources and the fear engendered by escalating nuclear arsenals is the frightening consequence of our inability to agree on a reversal of the nuclear arms race. The super powers' massive overcapacity in nuclear weapons, unbalanced though it is, will mean suicide for all, whoever initiates a nuclear war. Therefore, I believe that neither of the major powers, East or West, has people in control who are so malignant, so unfettered by the party or Government apparatus, to wish or to be permitted to consign his own countrymen and the rest of the world to ultimate destruction.

Monstrous though the arms race is, I believe that our over-preoccupation with it, to the exclusion of all else, blinds us to the greater and growing danger of nuclear and atomic proliferation. I am convinced that if nuclear war ever broke out it would be initiated not by the super powers but by a nation without any sense of responsibility, where power is concentrated in the hands of the evil, the insane, or the bigoted dictator.

That threat is real. To understand why that is so it is necessary for me to digress, and briefly explain how bombs are made, who has them and the effectiveness or otherwise of past and current controls.

There are two methods to producing these weapons —the plutonium route and the separated uranium 235 route. The plutonium method originally required large plant and considerable expenditure, but utilised only moderately sophisticated technology. Nowadays, the plant is cheaper, but the technology is considerably more complicated and the plutonium bomb is difficult to explode.

The uranium route previously required large and complex plant and was very expensive. Today, the plant is relatively cheap and compact, and the technology is well known to those who have the expertise to look it up. In a room the size of a large drawing room, one could make enough fissile material for one bomb a year, and that bomb is relatively easy to explode.

Initially the control of nuclear and atomic knowledge went well. It was difficult to produce separated uranium 235 from uranium 238 by the diffusion process, the plant was cumbersome, expensive, fraught with technical difficulties, and the countries that had discovered uranium effectively controlled its export. Consequently, those nations that wanted to beat a path to the nuclear door were forced to follow the more expensive plutonium route by building heavy water research reactors, and in time a classic route developed for nations wishing to build a nuclear weapon. That route was that a state first obtained its natural uranium, then announced a civil nuclear programme to produce electricity and stated that it needed to undertake research into its production. To do that, it had to build a heavy water reactor, which would make plutonium and hence the material for the plutonium bomb. That is what India has done at Trombay — using Canadian technology. It is what the Israelis say that Iraq was doing — using French technology — before Israel blew its reactor to pieces. It is what has been suggested that Argentina is doing, and Israel and Pakistan are alleged to be doing.

However, there are drawbacks to this method. The technology is sophisticated, and hence costly, and because of their size a plutonium production reactor and associated reprocessing plant takes time to construct and in consequence its operation can be monitored externally and its capability quite easily estimated by experts.

The passage of time and the advances in technology have made the second route, the uranium route, far more insidious. Using centrifuges or the jet process or lasers, uranium 235 is technically easier to produce than plutonium 239, the consequent bomb is easier to explode and, as I have indicated, the plant can simply be hidden or disguised.

Thus the technology is known and the material is available, and Third world countries have grasped the opportunity. India exploded a weapon in 1974; Pakistan and Argentina have embarked on the centrifuge route to an uranium bomb; South Africa has embarked on the jet process route; Brazil and Israel are using a variety of methods. Some may have already reached their goal.

It is sometimes simplistically suggested that if the major nuclear powers denied nuclear technology to other nations and removed the assistance they are already giving, all would be well. If the answer had been that simple, the world is still sane enough, and its leaders sensible enough, to have ensured that such a moderately simple action would have been taken. Indeed, that is what they have attempted. To begin with, the United States was able to impose controls to prevent other nations from acquiring a nuclear capacity by gaining a monopoly over the technical know-how and uranium deposits, and it worked—for a short time.

As other western nations invested huge sums in gaining nuclear expertise, they felt the need to recoup part of their investment, and assist exports, by passing on their knowledge to Third world countries. In 1956 the Americans, through the United Nations, attempted to ensure that all countries in receipt of nuclear technology opened their programmes to inspection by the new International Atomic Energy Agency. The Soviet Union and other countries since have refused, although the Soviets may well be changing their mind because I have little doubt that they are as frightened about proliferation as we are.

Many countries, including major suppliers such as France, refused to sign the non-proliferation treaty in 1968, for sovereignty or commercial reasons, or in the case of non-nuclear states, because they felt that by signing it they would not necessarily enhance their ability to obtain the promised benefits of civil nuclear power. Meanwhile, we and the United States recognised the problem but failed to deal with it. We have demanded "full scope safeguards", in other words, the right to inspect all nuclear facilities including those we have not assisted with, if we are to provide assistance with future civil nuclear plant. Many nations have refused to accept such conditions and, despite the cost, have gone it alone. Even

those countries that have signed the 1968 non-proliferation treaty, such as Japan and West Germany, find it easier under the terms of the treaty to sell nuclear technology to non-signatories such as Brazil, Argentina, Israel and Chile, than to those that have signed the treaty.

Therefore, the treaty is failing in two ways. First, there are significant omissions among the countries subscribing to it—India, Pakistan, Israel, Argentina, South Africa, France, China, Chile and Brazil. Secondly, commercial considerations appear to persuade signatories to sell to non-signatory nations in preference to those who are signatories. Furthermore, the non-weapon states do not believe, or at least use as an excuse, that the nuclear states are complying with article 6, the disarmament clause. In addition, non-nuclear states fear that nuclear states will use the threat of cutting off nuclear supplies as an element of non-nuclear foreign policy if they deal with an NPT signatory. But all the countries that have recently obtained the technology to produce nuclear and atomic weapons attest that their only reason for investing in this technology is to enable them to have a civil nuclear programme. Maybe the best way to curtail proliferation is to take them at their word.

The paradox is this. Whilst the major nuclear powers deny other countries access to nuclear technology, these countries always have the excuse that they require fissile material-producing research reactors in order to develop their own expertise in civil nuclear power generation.

But the Soviets supply their Communist satellites with all nuclear services on the provision that all spent fuel is returned to the USSR for reprocessing, and they ensure that that happens. That is the model that we should adopt. By supplying the technology for nuclear reactors to Third world countries, but only leasing the nuclear fuel, which would have to be returned for reprocessing, there would be no excuse for building a pilot reprocessing plant, or for producing uranium 235 from uranium 238. Indeed, any country building such a plant would be doing so only in order to gain the facility for producing nuclear or atomic weapons. The existence of a plutonium plant would be difficult to hide from external view, and by ensuring that all spent fuel was returned, none of the plutonium could be purloined for the manufacture of weapons.

I therefore believe that the non-proliferation treaty must be amended to permit the major nuclear nations to supply the technology required for the construction of nuclear power plants and the associated fuel cycle services on the understanding that: first, the nuclear fuel is only leased and must be returned for reprocessing; second, the recipient agrees not to engage in a uranium or plutonium weapons-building programme, or develop its expertise in those directions; and, third, an internationally agreed inspectorate is permitted to examine all civil nuclear plants as part of the "nuclear fuel leasing service".

As the recipient country will know that its development of plutonium bombs can be monitored, it will be put off from doing so by the certain knowledge that it would lose assistance with its civil nuclear programme. Once the recipient invests in that programme, the power generated and other trade and commercial considerations will be so great that the donor nations will be able to exert an effective pressure if the recipient ever appeared to be undertaking the atomic bomb route.

But the donor nations will also have to provide assurances. They will have to agree not to curtail nuclear supplies or services for reasons other than non-compliance with the three reasons I have given, or in the event of war. They will need to do that to reassure the eventual recipient that he will not be cut off from nuclear power generation.

Some have suggested that the non-proliferation treaty needs to be enforced more rigorously, and that that is all that is necessary. I do not agree. I believe that entrenching failure — because I believe that the non-proliferation treaty has failed, and I have demonstrated that it has failed —is not the answer. There is not time between now and September to rewrite and renegotiate a new treaty. Let us keep the current treaty and renegotiate a new treaty in a year's time or perhaps later. I feel that the Soviets would be interested in that.

While the world is in the midst of recession and while development of civil nuclear programmes is so expensive, my suggestion might have some chance of success. But with the world coming out of recession and nuclear expertise becoming more widespread, that chance is slipping away. It is not too late for our world to limit nuclear and atomic weapons, but it could soon well be.

10.28 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Richard Luce): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) on raising this debate on what is undoubtedly an extremely important issue relating to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. He has done a great service. I assure him that I shall consider carefully the detailed and well-thought-out points that he raised. If I cannot answer them all in the debate, I shall write to him in more detail.

The spread of nuclear weapons to countries that do not now possess them would have the gravest consequences for mankind, as my hon. Friend said. The chief barrier against such proliferation is the non-proliferation treaty, which bans the transfer by nuclear weapon states of nuclear weapons to any other recipient, and their acquisition or manufacture by non-nuclear weapon states. The treaty therefore increases the security of the world and the Government are strongly committed to supporting and strengthening it.

Negotiating the treaty in the 1960s was a major diplomatic achievement and Britain can be proud of having helped to draft it and of having been among the earliest to sign it. As my hon. Friend has said, the third review conference of the treaty will take place this August. We attach considerable importance to this meeting and have played our part as a depository Government in convening it.

I differ from my hon. Friend in his judgment about the success or failure of the treaty. I believe that it has been successful. In the 1960s it was predicted that there would be up to 20 additional nuclear weapon states by 1985. In fact, only one further state—India, which is not a party to the treaty in 1974 — demonstrated the capacity to detonate a nuclear explosive device. That may be partly because nuclear proliferation is not so straightforward technically as my hon. Friend suggests, but much of the credit must go to the existence of the treaty. The treaty is the most widely supported arms control agreement in existence, with nearly 130 parties or four fifths of the United Nations membership, and no state has exercised its right to withdraw from the treaty.

I do not entirely share my hon. Friend's view that the treaty is failing simply because there are significant non-parties, although the non-participation of those states is

[Mr. Richard Luce]

clearly a weakness. The vast majority of the world community has adhered to the treaty and that fact alone is of the greatest importance to the security of all states whether or not they are parties to the treaty.

Clearly the treaty would be even more effective if membership were universal. In collaboration with other states party to the treaty, we have been lobbying most of the 40 or so non-parties to accede to the treaty. In the past year, eight have done so, four of them in London, thus demonstrating the treaty's continued vitality.

Two states which possess nuclear weapons—France and China—are not parties to the treaty, but France has said that she will act as though she were a party and China has stated that she does not advocate or encourage proliferation.

Among the non-parties which do not possess nuclear weapons several have significant nuclear facilities not open to international inspection. My hon. Friend has referred to some of them. They are Argentina, India, Israel, Pakistan and South Africa. We attach particular importance to membership of the treaty by those countries and will continue to co-operate in international efforts to urge them to accede to the treaty. Pending their accession or their acceptance of internationally supervised safeguards on all their nuclear facilities, our policy is not to export nuclear materials, equipment or technology to them except for unambiguously peaceful purposes and then only on a very carefully controlled basis.

Article 3 of the treaty refers to safeguards, on which my hon. Friend has expressed some interesting and important views. He suggests that the treaty should be amended so that fuel would be leased to recipient countries and returned to the supplier for reprocessing, that the recipient should agree not to build nuclear weapons and that an internationally agreed inspectorate should examine all civil plants as part of what my hon. Friend described as nuclear fuel leasing services.

I sympathise very much with my hon. Friend's motives in putting forward those ideas, and I certainly appreciate his concern for adequate safeguards, which is at the heart of the agreement. Nevertheless, I believe that we should be very cautious about any proposals to amend the treaty itself. Any amendments must be approved by a majority of the nearly 130 parties to the treaty. Even if it were possible to win sufficient support, any proposed change would give rise to floods of other amendments that we might not be able to support. I believe, therefore, that it is much better to leave the text of the treaty unaltered so as not to endanger the whole treaty which has served us well.

I remind my hon. Friend of the vital role already played by the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards in verifying the binding international legal obligations which the treaty imposes on non-nuclear weapon state parties not to manufacture or acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Article III requires such safeguards to be applied to all source or special fissionable material anywhere in the territory of the state concerned or under its jurisdiction or control. Safeguards are designed to detect the diversion of such material away from peaceful uses. All our exports of fissionable material or equipment designed for its processing or use to any non-nuclear weapon state have been subject to safeguards under the existing terms of the treaty. I pay tribute to the valuable role of the IAEA in administering the safeguards system. The United Kingdom will continue to co-operate fully with IAEA safeguards and will assist the agency's efforts further to improve the system. I shall be visiting Vienna next week to learn more about the agency's work.

My hon. Friend may also wish to be reminded that we are one of 22 countries which apply the Nuclear Suppliers' Group guidelines to our exports of nuclear materials, equipment and technology to any non-nuclear weapon state for peaceful purposes. The guidelines reinforce the treaty. In addition to requiring IAEA safeguards on the items transferred, the guidelines require formal governmental assurances to be obtained from the recipient that the exported item will not be used to manufacture nuclear explosive devices, that it will be protected against theft or sabotage, and that if it is re-exported the new purchaser will be required to give the same assurances as the original customer. In the case of enriched uranium or plutonium, the prior consent of the original supplier must be obtained before re-transfer can take place. The guidelines also urge restraint on the transfer of sensitive technology such as reprocessing or enrichment facilities. I believe that the existing requirements go far to meet my hon. Friend's concerns.

As to the specific proposal for fuel leasing, the suggestion is not entirely new and certainly has some attractions. However, the system could not now be watertight because the treaty member states are not the exclusive suppliers of nuclear fuel. As for the establishment of an international inspectorate, that already exists in the form of the IAEA. We should continue to support efforts to extend IAEA safeguards to cover all nuclear facilities in all non-nuclear weapon states that are not parties to the treaty. We are doing all that we can to promote universal adherence to the treaty.

Article IV is an important part of the treaty, which deals with the peaceful use of nuclear energy. When the treaty was negotiated, many non-nuclear weapon states believed that if they were to forgo the option to manufacture or acquire nuclear weapons, this should not be at the expense of their right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. For that reason, article IV of the treaty both reaffirms that right and enjoins all parties to facilitate the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and technology for peaceful purposes.

In association with the safeguards required for article III, article IV seeks to promote the safe expansion of peaceful nuclear trade, but minimises the risk of nuclear proliferation. That can help the economic development of many of the member states. We have fully complied with our obligations under this article. As one of the first countries to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, we have considerable experience in the area and will continue to share our expertise with other countries, within the limits imposed by our overall non-poliferation policy.

The other important article in the treaty—article VI—deals with disarmament negotiations. It embodies the common determination of the parties to work for nuclear disarmament. The Government are strongly committed to the goals of this article. Therefore, we warmly welcome the arms control negotiations in Geneva between the United States and the Soviet Union. We fully support the agreed objective of preventing an arms race in outer space, and terminating it on earth. Negotiations between the superpowers, which possess 95 per cent. of the world's

nuclear weapons, are the first priority in pursuing the effective nuclear disarmament measures prescribed by the treaty.

Some critics maintain that the first step towards fulfilment of article VI is the negotiation of a comprehensive test ban. I hope to explain the Government's views on this issue at greater length in the Adjournment debate which is planned for tomorrow and is to be raised by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang). All I say at this stage is that, in my view, it would serve no one's interest for progress towards a comprehensive test ban—which is of great importance—to be artificially linked to the continued adherence to the non-proliferation treaty and its future. The non-proliferation treaty is important in its own right. We must not jeopardise it by holding it hostage to progress in other areas, however important they may be.

We are actively preparing for the treaty review conference which begins at the end of August. We have taken a full part in the work of the preparatory committee in which we chaired the group of Western countries. We have maintained close contact with other member states, including in particular the United States and the Soviet Union. It is worth emphasising that non-proliferation is an area of foreign policy where the views of both East and West largely coincide, as my hon. Friend acknowledged in his speech. As a Government we approach this review conference in a positive and constructive spirit.

I shall be attending the conference and will deliver the main British statement in the general debate. Our aim is to provide an outcome which maintains, and if possible strengthens, this arms control treaty. This will be facilitated if the parties review the treaty as a whole in a balanced manner, recognising its success in preventing horizontal proliferation and promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We are not complacent about the review conference but are encouraged by the progress made by the preparatory committee and the flexibility and good will displayed by those member states which participated in its work.

I believe that the arms control talks in Geneva between the United States and the Soviet Union will improve the atmosphere of debate on article VI; because such negotiations are precisely what this article requires. Once again, we urge all non-parties to reconsider their position and to adhere to this indispensable treaty which has done so much to make the world a safer place.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this issue, and I assure him that I shall give very careful thought to the specific points he has raised.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 7 June 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

9.35 am

Mr. Speaker: Today is a Back-Bench motions day, and the hon. Member who has won the first place in the ballot has the right to have his motion put to the House. Equally, other hon. Members have the right to speak and vote for or against that motion. I am well aware of the strong feelings aroused by the motion. I remind the House that it is a procedural one, and not primarily about the merits or otherwise of the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill.

I have selected the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and 53 other right hon. and hon. Members. I have received notice, perfectly properly, of other business to come ahead of today's principal debate. I hope that proceedings on those matters will not be artificially prolonged, and that today's proceedings will be conducted in the best traditions of the House of Commons.

New Writ (Brecon and Radnor)

9.36 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I beg to move,

"That Mr. Speaker do issue his Warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new Writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the County Constituency of Brecon and Radnor in the room of Tom Ellis Hooson, Esq., deceased."

I mention Tom Hooson, and I think that it would be appropriate at this stage to remind hon. Members of his untimely death and pay a tribute to the service that he gave to the House. I must admit that to me Brecon and Radnor does not immediately suggest Tom Hooson, because I had a great friend from that area, Caerwyn Roderick. I believe that the name of Caerwyn Roderick is synonymous with Brecon and Radnor, and that is how I managed to get to know a little bit about the place and about the magnificent service that he gave to our party, the Labour party, and to my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), the then leader of the Labour party, in his capacity as parliamentary private secretary.

Therefore, when I heard that there was the possibility of the writ for Brecon and Radnor being delayed, and I read the usual outpourings in the press—it must have been about a fortnight ago—I thought that it would be a good idea to get the thing hurried along. It so happened that at that time there was the suggestion that other matters would be moved this Friday. I am not sure whether I was thinking of moving the writ early, before the shock waves of the suggestion of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) hit the House of Commons, or whether it came after that, but it was about that time. I must make that point, because I am trying to show that it is purely a coincidence that my application falls on the day when other matters might have been discussed.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Before my hon. Friend leaves the question of Caerwyn Roderick, may I also mention Tudor Watkins? Only three days ago, I visited Lady Watkins in Brecon. He gave great service to the House between 1945 and 1970, and anyone who is interested in agriculture and hill farming should respect the memory of Tudor Watkins.

Mr. Skinner: I, too, remember Tudor Watkins. He had left by the time I came to the House, but I used to see him at Labour party conferences. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) went to see Tudor's widow the other day while on his tour of the Falklands, the General Belgrano and Miss Murrell. He goes all over the country on a solo campaign which is gaining ground, and I am pleased to say that the General Belgrano and all those other matters will become an issue in the by-election.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is my hon. Friend aware that Mr. Tom Hooson was a great advocate of life issues? He voted in all Divisions in favour of life issues. Does not my hon. Friend believe that the use of this procedure in this way does a great disservice to his memory?

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has a bit of a cheek, because he is part of a small group in the House which proposed to change the business of the day in a way which many people—not me—thought was an abuse of the procedures. Now he is trying to chide me for doing something to which I plead not guilty. In any case, Mr. Speaker, I think you would agree with me—I know you would—that we should talk about the issues that will be discussed during the by-election campaign, and not become involved in genetic engineering and other matters. I should say in passing that it is a bit rich that there is all this complaint about genetic engineering, yet the right hon. Member for South Down is acting as the master scientist and pottering about with that young embryo, the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden).

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not sure that that has much to do with the writ.

Mr. Skinner: No, but I think that you would agree, Mr. Speaker, that that might become an issue in the by-election. It is fair to say that anything that can be discussed in the House of Commons will become an issue in the Brecon and Radnor by-election. The Labour party candidate, Richard Willey, is only too anxious to get on with the job of raising those issues——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What solidarity.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend suggests that Mr. Willey may not be the greatest Left-winger of all time, but I shall be down there campaigning for him because he is the Labour candidate. I rest in the knowledge that our standard bearer in Brecon and Radnor will do a first-class job in raising all the issues that I may mention later, including the economy, the welfare state, and the countless other matters that may affect that rural area. It is between 30 and 40 miles wide——

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): It is perhaps nothing more than a coincidence, but I had a premonition that this might be a suitable day to raise the subject that the hon. Gentleman has raised, and I happened to come in armed with several books about the ralway history of

[Mr. Robert Adley]

central Wales. Will the hon. Gentleman refer during his speech to this vital consideration in the forthcoming by-election? If he does not, I hope that he will not consider it wrong of me to take up the point later in the morning.

Mr. Skinner: On page 6 or 7, I have a section dealing with transport, especially the Transport Bill and privatisation. I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) voted with the Labour party against the Transport Bili, but I shall let that pass. I know that our candidate, Richard Willey, will be campaigning on the Transport Bill and its effects on rural constituencies.

I am looking forward to Richard Willey sitting here, because I will advise him, as others advised me when I entered the House, that what one must get to know in this place, apart from all the politics, is the procedure. I shall suggest to Mr. Willey that he reads "Erskine May", because it may help him one day. He may need some background knowledge one unusual Friday. He will no doubt be campaigning about rail cuts and rail closures. I have no doubt that he will not be so parochial——

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to open the campaign of the Labour candidate?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should be, and I think he is, advancing his case as to whether I should issue my warrant in respect of this by-election. But I ask the hon. Gentleman not to go into too much detail of the issues in the campaign, and to stick to the writ and to the question whether I should grant my warrant.

Mr. Skinner: You are absolutely correct, Mr. Speaker. Today is not a day to become engaged in argument and hassle. It is a day on which we must consider this serious issue. It may be that, after I have heard comments on my motion from the Government and certainly from my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who may advance other arguments about the nature of the writ and whether it should be accepted, on this rare occasion, I may take all those suggestions into account and come to a different conclusion myself. Today, I am ready to listen to alternative arguments.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): As many hon. Members are not clear about the procedures involved in his application, will my hon. Friend make it clear that if we must vote on this matter we have a choice of setting a by-election date within 28 days or not setting a date for this Session since the Standing Orders state that the motion may be made only once? Therefore, will he make it clear that his application is not necessarily designed to be voted upon, but simply to persuade my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) to think of an alternative approach?

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has read "Erskine May", and I, too, have studied the matter. There may be an opportunity for other hon. Members to move motions that could affect the issue. But it does not matter because, as the right hon. Member for South Down, who is an expert in procedure, would be the first to agree, whatever happens today on a vote, the House is sovereign and it could, within the next few days, decide to overturn that decision.

This is one of the few areas, Mr. Speaker—I think that you will agree with me on this — where the Common Market has not ripped away our sovereignty. The House retains that power, and the Leader of the House could, if he wished, irrespective of the outcome of a vote today, decide to say that the House is sovereign and that we shall set a new date. The House has the power to do that, as it has power in many other areas, although sadly it is affected in many areas by Common Market regulations, which will no doubt become a feature of the by-election campaign, whenever it takes place.

A further reason why I believe that we can get this matter——

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): My hon. Friend raised an important point about the Common Market. Will he bear in mind that there is a problem there in relation to majorities and the exercise of a veto? Has he considered whether he wishes to exercise a veto on matters coming from the Government side of the House, or to rely on a majority?

Mr. Skinner: I kept my eye firmly on you, Mr. Speaker, while my hon. Friend made that point, and I saw a little bit of a nod, which suggested that we should not travel down that road. There are areas where we should not tread today. We should keep to the straight and narrow. One thing is certain — the Common Market is not straight and narrow. It has gravy trains, but it is not straight and narrow.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): When my hon. Friend develops that argument about whether a by-election in Brecon should take place within the next 28 days, possibly after a decision today, will he take up the point which I raised twice yesterday? Within that period of 28 days, there will be several thousand 16 and 17-year-old school leavers in Wales. One hundred and forty-four school leavers will chase one vacancy at a careers office in Wales. In Brecon there are only 10 vacancies for the hundreds of school leavers there. Brecon is one of only four careers offices in Wales which has 10 or more vacancies. Only the offices in Cardiff and Shotton have 11 vacancies or more. In Wales, 38 of the 42 careers offices have fewer than 10 vacancies. Indeed, eight of them have not a single job for young people, and seven have only one job each. Will my hon. Friend develop the question of the need for a speedy by-election so that the Labour candidate can give hope to those thousands of young school leavers, and attack the Government for their mass unemployment policies?

Mr. Skinner: Although I am sure that others will do so, I intend to see to it that our friend in Brecon and Radnor will receive a copy of the report of today's debate while he advances the cause of our party in the election campaign. He will then be able to read all the comments made, including those of my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) in his description of what I have loosely termed on other occasions Yosserland. Young people in Brecon and Radnor and elsewhere cannot get a job when they leave school, even with all their O-levels, A-levels and other certificates. Unemployment will become a big factor in the campaign.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): My hon. Friend referred earlier to Caerwyn Roderick. Will he bear in mind our friend's robust knowledge of the education needs of the Welsh people? Does he believe that, together with the problem of youth unemployment, education will figure largely in the by-election campaign? Does he agree that that needs to be brought to the fore?

Mr. Skinner: The Government's education policy will be a prominent issue in the campaign; no one can deny that. I have some figures for Brecon and Radnor, and they are more pertinent than the general arguments.

I was about to say that another reason why we can have a fairly early by-election is that the parties have already lined up their candidates. I believe that the Welsh nationalists are dealing with the selection of their candidate this weekend. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), if he catches your eye later, Mr. Speaker, will probably tell us what the position is. I am told that the Social Democratic and Liberal parties are ready for the by-election.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Which one is standing?

Mr. Skinner: I am not sure, as I have not gone into that matter. However, I have told the people of Brecon and Radnor to ask the alliance candidate which party and leader he supports, and to ask him whether he is in favour of getting rid of cruise or keeping cruise, as the Liberals and Social Deomcratics think respectively. That will be an important factor in the campaign.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): The people of Brecon and Radnor would give a simple answer to that if they remembered that at one time their Member of Paliament was Mr. Tudor Watkins. His advice would undoubtedly have been "No" to cruise.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend, who represents a Welsh constituency, is better versed in these matters than I am. He keeps a close eye on all things Welsh—even the choirs. He also knows a bit about them. Perhaps my hon. Friend will be able to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, and present the special Welsh considerations. I do not intend to use all the pages of my speech because the matter would be better debated. In view of the unusual number of hon. Members present this Friday, they should take part and make some additional points.

I know that the alliance has its candidate ready and, therefore, that is all right in terms of the general electoral considerations. I believe that it has transported people to Radnor on a semi-joint selection basis. I do not think that they voted on a one person, one vote system. The SDP sent representatives from the regions, but the Liberals adopted a different tactic. It was called joint selection, but those of us in the know understand how it works. I believe that the alliance bussed those people in with British School of Motoring money.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Before my hon. Friend leaves that important point, can he say from his expert knowledge of the internal workings of the SDP and Liberal parties in Wales whether their candidate has the support of the leader of the SDP in Wales or of the leader of the SDP in the United Kingdom? As my hon. Friend knows, the leader of the SDP in Wales, Mr. Gwynoro Jones, has no confidence in the leader of the SDP in the United Kingdom as a whole. Indeed, he is on record as thoroughly criticising the leader of the SDP in the United Kingdom. Does he agree that that is a crucial matter, of which the people of Brecon should become aware?

Mr. Skinner: That will blow up during the campaign. When the writ is issued, many people will jump on that bandwagon. There is a great deal of comment in the local press about Gwynoro Jones. I managed to get hold of some of it many weeks ago. He became a Member of the House at the same time as me—I mention that en passant. I remember him well. The problem, to put it crudely and simply, is that Gwynoro Jones was the satellite of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins). When the right hon. Gentleman lost the job as leader, it created friction, and Gwynoro Jones cannot settle down with the new leader of the SDP. Sparks will undoubtedly fly, and I look forward to them because it will help our candidate.

Mr. Thomas Torney (Bradford, South): My hon. Friend has made several references to "Erskine May". Will he read the paragraphs of "Erskine May" which are relevant to the writ, and explain what they mean?

Mr. Skinner: I understand that a Conservative Member may deal with that matter.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Allies!

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman says that we are allies, but there is plenty of evidence that I began the campaign for the writ many days ago purely in an attempt to accommodate the candidates down in Brecon and Radnor. If the hon. Gentleman listens carefully, he will find that that issue is dealt with. I know that he is upset because he is on the other side.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In what?

Mr. Skinner: In nearly every respect. I have said from the outset that we are not involved in a game. This is a serious matter. We are debating this issue to give hon. Members an opportunity to discuss important topics on a Friday, when most hon. Members are around.

I have just seen where the Tory candidate was nominated.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): There are two of them.

Mr. Skinner: One of the Liberals behind me who keeps rabbiting on says that there are two Tory candidates. If there are, all well and good. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will justify that comment in the campaign. He will be able to say so in his *Focus* leaflet which floats under doors day after day—their content will probably change day after day. By and large, the candidates of the main parties are ready for action. Our candidate has his troops massed on the Black mountains and on the Brecon Beacons.

There is another point which I referred to earlier but which I should like to re-emphasise in case some of my hon. Friends are a little worried about my moving the writ. There is a motion on the Order Paper which refers to using Friday as suggested by the hon. Member for Kemptown and which says that it is an abuse to do such a thing. There are differences between some of us who take an alternative view about that matter. I have not signed that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That comes when the hon. Gentleman has finished his submission. I welcome this new-found establishment figure. The hon. Gentleman is

[Mr. Speaker]

otherwise absolutely in order and I pay tribute to him for that. If other hon. Members who may be called to speak follow his example and watch me nodding or shaking my head, I shall not need to interrupt too often.

Mr. Skinner: I shall shortly finish to enable Liberals, Tories, Welsh Nationalists and some of my colleagues from Wales to speak. It is a good idea to keep the Government up all weekend, but I am not too keen on the idea of keeping Back Benchers up and not causing the Government any trouble.

Mr. Speaker *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: Yes, I am moving on now.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with the motion.

Mr. Skinner: I have discussed the matter with my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo). We were talking about Friday. It has been a topic of conversation in the Tea Room and elsewhere. I asked him the other day, "What are the odds, Mik?" He said, "We have not got a book on it—the odds are so long that we shall be there all weekend." I said, "Well, I shall slip anchor on Friday." To which he replied, "That's running on Wednesday." Do not get me wrong, Mr. Speaker. I am not trying to score a victory by seven or eight lengths—a short head will do—but we need to have a little in reserve.

It will be a lively by-election. It will be about the fact that monetarism has failed—the Prime Minister's brand of monetarism, that is. There is a place for monetarism somewhere, but it is hardly likely to be developed in a highly technological country such as ours. I believe in my simple fashion that standing on one's own two feet went out with Robinson Crusoe—he had to get Man Friday to bail him out. The Government's philosophy and their record in the past six months will become a great feature of the campaign, as will their record on unemployment and the massive cost of it.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I think that my hon. Friend will appreciate what I have to say. When talking of the Government's record, he will recall his activities during the coal miners' strike. I do not want to raise that matter, but my hon. Friend may not be aware that one of the leaders of the Durham Miners Association, Jimmy Inskip, died last night. In view of my hon. Friend's interest in the mining industry, perhaps he would like to pay a short tribute to the leadership of the Durham miners, including Jimmy Inskip, who I do not doubt would have been joining my hon. Friend in the by-election had he still been alive.

Mr. Skinner: I shall not make too much of that. My hon. Friend has got his name recorded and I suppose that that will suffice. Many miners will participate in the campaign, as they did in the county council election campaign. Many more than we expected participated and some of the results in the coalfields were exceptionally good. That includes parts of south Wales, of which Brecon and Radnor is a part.

I was discussing the main issues in the campaign and, as hurriedly as possible, mentioning the dole queues, education, state earnings-related pensions, the threatened abolition of wages councils and the Common Market, which is always a good runner in by-elections. We shall give our candidate some advice on that.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Another issue will be how the nurses are being short-changed on the phasing of their pay award as announced yesterday.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend will be pleased to know that I have, in my notes, details about hospital closures in Powys. I am skipping across such information on hospitals and education, for example, so that others can go into more detail. My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) is a long-standing hon. Member who I believe will be going at the end of this Parliament. I hope that he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, as he can speak on behalf of the disabled and others as he has done so well during his many years in the House. I am sure that he could shed some light on the problems of nurses and others. The election campaign will be about the Health Service, pensions and the closure of railways.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): My hon. Friend has mentioned several substantial issues that will be debated in the election campaign. Does he believe that political devolution will also feature largely in the campaign?

Mr. Skinner: It has not done so for some years in Wales or Scotland. I shall not get involved in a matter which may not be significant in the campaign. I am sticking to the general issues. All the issues that I have mentioned will be debated at length. At the end of all that, we shall have a new Member of Parliament to represent that constituency.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend may be about to ask some awkward questions, so perhaps I would do better to suggest that, as he knows so much about procedural matters and once nearly moved a writ himself, he may wish to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, during this very lengthy debate.

The House of Commons is an unusual place. There are many heartaches and few blessings, but one thing is certain. This place, like life generally, is full of surprises. One comes here one morning and the unexpected happens. In a way, that is reinvigorating. Just as one is beginning to lose faith a little, something new happens. This Friday has been one of those unusual days. It was started by the right hon. Member for South Down, who put the cat among the pigeons. I know that the motion is in the name of the hon. Member for Kemptown, but I think that the right hon. Member for South Down will agree with me that there are days when we win and days when we lose and I have a sneaking feeling that this day will belong to those of us who are arguing for this writ and for an early by-election. That is the important point.

I am prepared to be flexible in these matters——

Mr. Beith *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: All right; I know that the hon. Gentleman has been trying.

Mr. Beith: Has not the hon. Gentleman ascertained whether his own Chief Whip and the Government Chief Whip have arranged to introduce a motion to prevent the

House from reaching a decision about the writ and thus to prevent the early by-election that we should welcome as much as the hon. Gentleman claims?

Mr. Skinner: When the current leader of the Liberal party in the House today starts talking like that, I worry about his position vis-a-vis you, Mr. Speaker, because I do not want any unnecessary trouble and what the hon. Gentleman has just suggested borders nigh on heresy. He has suggested that plans have been made when we know that everything today has been spontaneous. I must admit that I had a little help from the Clerks in the Table Office. I shall not name them because they did a good job and I do not want to hamper their promotion.

I look forward to the continuation of this debate, Mr. Speaker. Having spent a few moments making the argument, I bring you this little blue form and rest my case.

10.13 am

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I oppose the suggestions made by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and perhaps two personal reasons qualify me to do so. I might easily have entered the House as a result of a by-election, because immediately before the last general election I was the Conservative candidate for Cardiff, North-West and a writ for a by-election would have been announced but for the calling of the general election. Therefore, I well understand what is involved in the organisation of a by-election and all the considerations that go with it.

I am somewhat appalled, however, that the hon. Member for Bolsover should proceed in this way today. It seems to have slipped his memory and that of certain other right hon. and hon. Members that our late colleague, Tom Hooson, who was an excellent Member of Parliament and a first-rate representative of the constituency of Brecon and Radnor, died only on 8 May. It was a sad, cruel and untimely death for a man who almost until the end worked extremely hard and assiduously on behalf of his constituents. That was just four short weeks ago. I suggest that in seeking this morning to move the writ for a by-election the hon. Member for Bolsover is proceeding with somewhat indecent haste.

I assure the hon. Member for Bolsover and the whole House that there is no reluctance on the part of the Conservative party to fight this by-election. As the hon. Gentleman has said, our candidate is already in place. Chris Butler is an excellent candidate and may be the only Welsh-speaking candidate to fight the by-election. He is also a constituent of mine, and I cannot speak too highly of him.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it would be completely unacceptable if the electors in that constituency could not elect a Member of Parliament before September, as they would be left unrepresented for a long period? It is important that the election should take place before people start going away on holiday, as the new proposals for holiday voting are not yet in operation. Does the hon. Member accept that the sooner the election takes place the better will be the opportunities for most people in the constituency to participate?

Mr. Jones: I do not disagree entirely with the hon. Gentleman's suggestion. He intervened earlier to point out the difficulties that would arise if the motion moved by the hon. Member for Bolsover were defeated. We do not want that to happen. As I have said, there is no reluctance on the part of the Conservative party to proceed to a by-election. I agree that it should take place relatively early, but I do not believe that today is the right time to pursue this. The hon. Member for Bolsover pointed out that the Welsh nationalists do not have a candidate in place yet. I have no brief to speak for Plaid Cymru, so I had better give way to its former leader.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Our candidate will be in place by tomorrow night, so that is no reason for holding back the election. More important, if the writ is moved today the by-election could take place on, say, 4 July, before the main holiday period begins. That is important not just from the point of view of people in Brecon and Radnor going away on holiday, but because of the impact of the tourist industry on the constituency, which would be a major problem if the by-election were held towards the end of July. In practice, that would mean holding the by-election over until the autumn and leaving the constituency without representation for the intervening period.

Mr. Jones: I know the significance of the remarks of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), for we were both in the Brecon and Radnor constituency recently when the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs was investigating tourism in Mid-Wales. That visit took place just before the sad death of Tom Hooson. I agree that an early by-election is needed, but this is not the right moment to pursue it. I assure the Opposition that the Conservative party has an excellent organisation locally as well as an excellent candidate who is looking forward to contesting the seat at an early date. If the writ is moved today, Plaid Cymru will inevitably be at a disadvantage if its candidate is not adopted until tomorrow, because the announcement will not filter out until next week. I know that Plaid Cymru has a very small party organisation and has to save up for the deposit, which it will certainly lose yet again.

I suspect the motives of the hon. Member for Bolsover. He has rightly referred to all the important issues which will be fully debated and explored during the by-election campaign. Attention will be focused upon who comes third in the by-election. Will the Labour party be able to keep the alliance in third place or will Labour go down to that place? Is the hon. Member for Bolsover seeking to take a mean advantage by jumping the gun on Plaid Cymru, which is at present in fourth place, and trying to make sure that Plaid Cymru stays below the Labour party?

Mr. Adley: A moment ago the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) mentioned tourism and holidaymakers. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) believe that an issue at the forthcoming by-election should be the legislation passed by the House during this Session, which implements a pledge made by our party at the last general election to give votes to holidaymakers? Does that not demonstrate the serious intention of the Conservative party to increase the franchise and enable people to vote at elections?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend is quite right. That important reform of our electoral system is widely welcomed throughout the country, particularly in the

[Mr. Jones]

constituency of Brecon and Radnor, which is an important constituency for tourism. It is also a very important agricultural constituency. Because of the constraints placed upon the agricultural industry, those involved can have rather different holiday commitments. I assure the hon. Member for Bolsover that the Conservative party is looking forward to an early by-election in Brecon and Radnor. I am looking forward to Mr. Chris Butler, our excellent Welsh-speaking candidate, joining me on these Benches.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the issues in the forthcoming by-election will be the pledge by both Opposition parties to introduce the rating of agricultural land?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend has referred to a dangerous and emotive issue — the threat by the alliance to introduce the rating of agricultural land. It will be a very important by-election issue. It is unnecessary to debate today the issues which will be fully covered in the by-election campaign. The Conservative party is not reluctant about the holding of an early by-election, but this matter ought to be dealt with in the proper way.

Therefore, I urge the hon. Member for Bolsover not to pursue his motion. I anticipate that what both he and the Conservative party want to happen will happen very shortly.

10.24 am

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I rise to support the motion that the writ be moved for the Brecon and Radnor by-election. Whether or not the by-election could be held on 4 July is another matter. If it could be held earlier—say on 27 June—that would be even better. The Brecon and Radnor constituency should be represented.

I rise to speak from no party political motive. As has already been mentioned, our candidate will not be selected until tomorrow evening. From a narrow party political point of view, it could be argued that we ought to wait longer before holding the by-election, so that the candidates can get to know the constituency. Brecon and Radnor parliamentary candidates need time in which to get to know the constituency, but it is even more important for the electors of Brecon and Radnor to have somebody to speak on their behalf. They ought not to be unrepresented throughout the summer.

Plaid Cymru is under no illusion about the outcome of the by-election. My party is unlikely to win it. Therefore, we can viewtion the by-election dispassionately. Nevertheless, a by-election presents an important opportunity for issues that are of concern to the community to be debated. Plaid Cymru wants to take part in that debate and to use the by-election as a means of impressing upon the Government, the Welsh Office and the House the pressing problems that face the constituents of Brecon and Radnor.

I know a fair amount about the constituency. Before I became a Member of Parliament I lived in the borough of Merthyr Tydfil. Part of the old borough of Merthyr Tydfil is now, as a result of the change in boundaries, part of Breconshire. When I was a councillor on the old county borough council, I was aware of the major problems that faced the people of Breconshire. Breconshire forms the hinterland to Merthyr Tydfil. The problems of 1974 are even more acute now, and the mechanism of a by-election is needed to focus upon them.

It would be right for me at this stage to add my tribute to the late Tom Hooson. He was a friend of many hon. Members. I got to know him well when we both sat on the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs but I knew him for many years before he became a Member of Parliament. He contested the Caernarfon seat in 1959 and obtained the highest number of votes that the Conservatives had had for several decades in that constituency. I am glad to say that the Conservative vote has subsequently declined.

Tom Hooson was held in very great respect in Wales. He served the Brecon and Radnor constituency with great diligence, as did his predecessors Caerwyn Roderick and Tudor Watkins. Both Caerwyn Roderick and Tudor Watkins knew in detail the problems of this constituency. Geographically, Brecon and Radnor is the largest constituency in England and Wales. Any candidate who takes part in an election there needs to have close knowledge of it. Tom Hooson succeeded in gaining that knowledge. Before he became the Member of Parliament for Brecon and Radnor, he worked in it for a period, and learned about its problems. He was a good constituency Member of Parliament, and it provided him with the base for his support in the last General Election. It will be a challenge to his successor to live up to the standards set by Tom Hooson and also by Caerwyn Roderick and Tudor Watkins. Tudor Watkins was also involved in local government. He held office on the old Breconshire county council.

The writ needs to be moved as early as possible before the election so that the campaign can be as long as possible. Every candidate ought to try to visit every community in the constituency. There are 93 villages in my constituency. I try to visit all of them during an election campaign. The constituency of Brecon and Radnor is substantially larger than mine. A candidate who wishes to visit all those communities during an election campaign needs as much time as possible in which to do so. Therefore, the writ ought to be moved as early as possible.

Mr. Cyril Smith (Rochdale): I understand that, if the election is to be held on a Thursday, the last Thursday upon which it could be held is 27 June.

Mr. Wigley: There are precedents for holding by-elections on days other than Thursday. That is a point to which we ought to apply our minds. Tom Hooson worked in detail on constituency problems. He was aware of them when he made his maiden speech on 23 May 1979. He raised a number of issues which inevitably will arise in the by-election for which we are pressing today. Those issues still need to be raised. One of the issues which he raised, to which I referred in an intervention during the speech of the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones), was the importance of tourism. He said of the town of Brecon that more people were coming into the tourist office there than anywhere else in south Wales. That shows the major importance of the tourist industry to the Brecon and Radnor constituency, and it is a factor that we should bear in mind in considering the moving of the writ and a suitable date for the by-election.

Tom Hooson was a member of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, which is currently studying tourism in

Wales. In recent months Tom Hooson's presence has been greatly missed in that Committee. There is a need for him to be replaced and for the by-election to take place, to ensure that Brecon and Radnor has a voice at this important time when we are considering matters such as tourism.

Mr. Adley: The hon. Gentleman is talking about tourism in Wales and its relevance to the by-election campaign. Would he agree that the policy of the Wales tourist board in promoting farmhouse tourism has been particularly successful in the Brecon and Radnor constituency? Would the hon. Gentleman care to pay tribute to the Wales tourist board?

Mr. Wigley: Although, perhaps, I should not refer to the work of the Select Committee and the study that is currently in progress, it is correct to say that, as Members of this House, we have had an opportunity recently to see at first hand the developments in farmhouse tourism. We have seen the way in which the Wales tourist board in the Brecon and Radnor constituency — and in the Montgomeryshire constituency — has developed the training, back-up and facilities for those involved in farming who want also to undertake tourism. Very high standards of provision have been developed in that way. Farms working in a cluster of 12 or more market themselves to get the maximum benefit for their area. It is a major development and it is of importance to the farmers of Brecon and Radnor.

During July, August and early September, the farmers of Brecon and Radnor will be very busy with their farming but they will also be involved at that time in tourism, and I accept what the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) said about that work of the Wales tourist board.

Before the hon. Gentleman's intervention I referred to Tom Hooson's work in the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs. I do not think that there can be many hon. Members of this House who, in their maiden speech, have referred in detail to a Select Committee as a major point. Tom Hooson regarded the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs as a body

"in which we can achieve discussion that is realistic and formative to enable us to make pragmatic decisions."

The Select Committee needs people such as Tom Hooson and we certainly need to have the seat filled.

In his maiden speech, Tom Hooson also referred to an issue that is of immense concern to Brecon and Radnor when he said:

"all hon. Members are anxious to see unemployment figures coming down".—[*Official Report*, 23 May 1979; Vol. 967, c. 1157-8.]

Unemployment in Wales at that time stood at 85,000. Today the admitted figure in Wales is over 170,000, so it has doubled since Tom Hooson made his maiden speech. Tom Hooson was right in 1979 to underline the importance of unemployment. With the figure now at more than 170,000, how much more does the issue of unemployment impact on the constituency?

Unemployment is not only a scourge of many urban areas; it is a pressing problem in rural areas. One of the major issues that will arise in the by-election is the problem of travel to work, because of the lack of a public transport system. I have correspondence from people living in Brecon and Radnor who fear the effects of the Transport Bill on communities. Unless there is a public transport system to serve the communities, it is next to impossible for many young unemployed people who are seeking work to go after the few jobs that may be available.

Tom Hooson often referred in his speeches to the fact that his constituency has the highest ownership of cars of any constituency in Wales. That is not because it is the richest constituency or the constituency with the greatest disposable personal income or wealth per capita. It is because a car is a prerequisite for people to get to and from work and about their normal everyday business. But, of course, many people—especially the young—may not be able to afford cars. That underlines the need to bring work to the people, rather than expecting them to travel to work in outside areas.

Another problem in Brecon and Radnor is the standard of the roads. The county of Powys has 261 miles of trunk road—more than any other county in Wales. My own county has 206 miles. Dyfed—a very large county—has 233 miles. Some counties, such as West Glamorgan, have only 28 miles; South Glamorgan has 26 miles. Yet the expenditure by the Welsh Office on trunk roads has been very small indeed in the Powys area in which the Brecon and Radnor constituency lies. I accept that there has been expenditure on the M4 in south Wales, going through Gwent and the Glamorgans, and there has been expenditure in north Wales in Clwyd and even in Gwynedd. But the county of Powys has been deprived of proper expenditure on roads. I have no doubt that in the forthcoming by-election the provision of roads will be an important issue and that many people will want to address themselves to it.

I realise that other hon. Members wish to speak, so I will move rapidly to the issue that concerned Tom Hooson most of all, and on which he made frequent contributions to debates in this House. I refer to the rate support grant structure in Wales, particularly as it affects the county of Powys and the area of Brecon and Radnor.

In the period before the by-election takes place, candidates of all parties would do well to study the mechanisms of the rate support formula. It is a complicated formula. Many people in Brecon and Radnor rightly feel that insufficient emphasis is given to the sparsity of population and the effect that it has on the cost of maintaining essential services such as roads, education and social security. As a result, the expenditure per capita on many services in Brecon and Radnor has to be much higher than in other areas to maintain the same level of service. Yet the grant that is given to the Powys county council has been inadequate, and it has been necessary year after year to bring in special devices and safety nets to avoid the full impact on Brecon and Radnor of the logic of the present rate support grant formula.

The safety nets, however, have not been sufficient to safeguard the residents of the constituency from continuing increases in the rate burden. There is a need to maintain services in the communities and to distribute the burden in an equitable fashion. If any of us were trying to pay tribute to Tom Hooson's work in this House, the best means of doing so would be to continue to put the arguments on rate support grant. Obviously, other rural areas of Wales are affected, as are areas in England such as the south-west and the north-west, although there the details of the formula are slightly different.

All the issues that I have mentioned require attention in the by-election. It needs to be held at an early date, so

[Mr. Wigley]

that the new Member, from whatever party he or she may be, will have an opportunity to speak on the important issues before the summer recess.

10.39 am

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): The House owes a great debt of gratitude to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) for moving the writ.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): My hon. Friend speaks for himself.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend says that I speak for myself. I do, but I also speak for many other hon. Members.

There are cogent reasons why we should pay tribute to the hon. Member for Bolsover. He has reminded us of the responsibility and power of Back Benchers. He has moved a writ. For far too long in the House the moving of a writ has been the subject of a cosy relationship between the Whips Offices. *[Interruption.]* I note an aspirate noise from the Liberal Chief Whip who has rather attenuated, not to say presumptuous, ideas of one day occupying the position of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

There is no reason why the movement of a writ should be the subject of a cosy relationship between the Front Benches. Election to Parliament is as much a matter for Back Benchers as for the Government. The hon. Member for Bolsover has therefore done a great service in moving the writ. Although I am against the House granting the writ, I hope that the precedent will be borne in mind.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Windy.

Mr. Hogg: No, I am not windy. I am a constitutionalist.

Mr. Adley: My hon. Friend appears to have made up his mind how he will vote on the motion as to whether we should move the writ for the Brecon and Radnor by-election. At the moment, I am unsure how I shall vote. I am therefore listening to the debate with great interest. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that we should know where the official Opposition and the Government stand on the issue? Does he therefore hope that we shall hear from our right hon. Friend the Leader of the House what advice he has to give to those of us who at the moment may be uncertain as to how we should vote?

Mr. Hogg: I have always found my hon. Friend to be a fair-minded man. I am therefore not in the least surprised to hear that he is approaching the debate with an open mind. That is precisely what I should expect. Knowing him as I do, I am aware that he approaches the matter with not just an open mind, but an informed mind. I see the volumes on railways that he has beside him. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) will express their views, and that my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) will express his views because the issue of railways in Wales is a matter of the utmost interest to the people of Grantham and to the House. We need some specialised advice about railways.

The House needs the guidance of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. He has been in his place for much of this morning. I am sure that he will give us his guidance. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney has a great contribution to make to the debate. I hope that it is not presumptuous of me, Mr. Speaker, to say that if the right hon. Gentleman rises in his place at about 11.30 or 12 o'clock, you might feel it appropriate to call him.

Those points, however, are at the margins. We must decide the holding of a by-election. The Conservative party is extremely anxious, in principle, to hold a by-election.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I am sure that the House would love to know why, in practice, the Government may not be keen to have a by-election, despite their principles. Is it something to do with the result?

Mr. Hogg: No. The hon. Gentleman is too interested in trivial matters. We are interested in having a by-election because to begin with—for reasons that I shall deploy—I am a constitutionalist, and I am against upsetting carefully contrived arrangements that have stood the House in good stead. Although it happens to be coincidental, I am against, for example, the motion that has been promoted by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell).

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that our procedures for calling by-elections are not exactly tried and tested and that they are, on the whole, a series of squalid deals? The most useful thing that could emerge from this debate would be for the matter to be referred to a Speaker's Conference on electoral law so that we could obtain a formula for calling by-elections which did not involve the Whips, but which brought about a by-election automatically fairly rapidly, so that people in the areas involved would obtain their rights to be represented in the House as quickly as possible.

Mr. Hogg: I have never heard of an arrangement in the House which did not involve the Whips, other than today's debate, of course, which has been singularly untampered with by the Whips.

Mr. Cyril Smith: Has it?

Mr. Hogg: If the hon. Gentleman wants to make a contribution and can get to his feet, I shall willingly give way.

Mr. Smith: I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving way. His contribution is much more suited to a university knockabout than to the House of Commons. He said that the Whips have not been involved in the debate. If I were him, I should wait until about 12 o'clock and see how it unfolds. He can then satisfy himself that the Whips have not been involved.

Mr. Hogg: I may have a premonition as to how the debate will unfold. I say with considerable confidence that this is not a debate about which the Whips have become unduly worried. It is a debate in which Back Benchers are interested, and they are interested in the other matters that the House is minded to discuss. However, at the moment, we are talking about the writ.

The Conservative party is anxious, in principle, to have a by-election—for a good reason. We have been in power in this Parliament for some two years. At that point, it is not surprising that, as a Government, we are less popular than previously. A by-election is a good moment for a party to deploy and explain its policies and to answer

criticisms. I welcome the principle of by-elections, because we have good arguments on jobs, the economy, health care and education.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Although the hon. Gentleman discounts arguments from the Opposition, does he feel that the Government are delaying the by-election because they are worried about the inevitable result? Does he think that there is another matter to which the House should turn its attention—the fact that the deposit paid by candidates has not yet been affected by the Representation of the People Bill which is in another place at the moment? Does he believe that the Government are delaying their decision until the deposit can be increased? That will be a long time, because the Bill has to be dealt with in another place and there has to be a statutory instrument. Does he think that some constitutional jiggery-pokery is going on to which he should be addressing himself and about which the House should be worried?

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful for that most ingenious point, which requires careful consideration. It is one upon which we might need the advice of a Law Officer.

Mr. Speaker *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hogg: Mr. Speaker does not think that we do. Other hon. Members may think that we do, in which event it would be proper for other hon. Members to suggest that we need the advise of a Law Officer. It would then be for Mr. Speaker to rule upon the matter. It is a most interesting point. Do we need the advice of a Law Officer? I think not.

The Government have decided—in my view, rightly—to increase deposits in by-elections, but that does not go to the essential nature of the by-election to which we are addressing ourselves. The Conservative party is likely to win the by-election at Brecon and Radnor, whatever happens. It is not anxious to exclude anyone from participation. Why should the Conservative party wish to do that? It has nothing to fear from a by-election. The House should realise that the Conservative party welcomes the prospect of a by-election, which raises the question——

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): Does my hon. Friend agree that there are probably two reasons why the Labour party may be especially keen to hurry on the by-election at Brecon and Radnor? First, the deposit may be cheaper in the immediate future than by the autumn. If it is to lose its deposit, it would rather lose £150 than £500. Leaving aside that sort of trivia, does my hon. Friend agree that in mid-term an Opposition think that they may be able to score points or win by-elections? However, as time goes on, the Labour party, the Liberal party and other parties recognise that the Government's fortunes, especially when backed by such excellent policies, are likely to improve in the mind of the electorate. Therefore, with the passage of time, the prospect of the Government winning the by-election at Brecon and Radnor becomes all the more certain.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. and learned Friend has made two important contributions to the debate. We know that the Labour party's funds are at a low ebb. We know also that its support in the country is not as powerful as it would like. We are aware that its finances are in dicky order. The best advice that we can give to the Labour party is that it is likely to lose its deposit in the by-election. It is clear that it wants to hurry on the by-election so that its loss is minimised.

My hon. and learned Friend was right to speak about the acceptance of the Government's policies. The policies that they have been implementing are achieving success. For example, we are told by the Opposition and others that we have a stagnant economy. Yet growth last year was about 3 per cent. Investment increased by about 9 per cent. and exports increased by about 10 per cent. We know that 613,000 jobs have been created since June 1983. These are matters to which the electorate needs to have regard.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Is my hon. Friend aware that I fully share his confidence that the Conservative party will do extremely well in the by-election which is the subject of the motion before the House? However, I have one little worry — that the prospects for the Conservative party in the forthcoming by-election are likely to be damaged by the addiction of persons on the Treasury Bench to the Warnock report and hostility to the Bill that has been introduced by the right hon. Member for South Down.

Mr. Hogg: I always listen to the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) with the greatest respect. However, I think that he is wrong to say that the opposition to the Powell Bill, if I may so describe it—the Bill promoted by the right hon. Member for South Down—emanates solely from the Treasury Bench. There is widespread opposition to the Bill in this place. However, that does not alter the fact that that issue is not relevant to the motion that is before us.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I am sure that my hon. Friend would not wish to mislead the House. The Bill to which he has referred had an overwhelming majority on Second Reading. It completed its Committee stage and enjoyed a procedural majority of some size when it started on Report. The Bill has overwhelming support in the House and in the country.

Mr. Adley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance. You properly ruled at the beginning of the debate that we are discussing the Brecon and Radnor by-election writ, which has been moved by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), and you properly informed the House that we should not indulge in any discussion of matters which may be reached later today. However, there has been discussion, quite properly, of the issues which may be raised during the forthcoming by-election, should it be held on an earlier date than may have been anticipated. Bearing in mind the interventions of my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), will you rule whether an issue that might be raised during the by-election is the one that has been raised by my right hon. and hon. Friends so that those who participate in the debate know whether they are in order?

Mr. Speaker: We are discussing a writ for the Brecon and Radnor by-election. It may be that an allusion during this debate to the subsequent debate is in order, but it must be a passing allusion. It would not be in order to address the main issues that will feature in the later debate. It will be appropriate to deal with those issues when the House deals with the motion of the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden).

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful Mr. Speaker. I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest and my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) had to say. I understood that they were raising the issue of the Warnock report in the context of the by-election. If I had not thought that, I should not have responded to their interventions. To have done so otherwise would have been grossly out of order. My right hon. and hon. Friends made their interventions in the context of the by-election that we all hope will take place within the foreseeable future, but both are wrong in asserting that the House, by an overwhelming majority, supports the Bill that has been introduced by the right hon. Member for South Down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not the issue. I ask the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) to return to the writ.

Mr. Hogg: Indeed, Mr. Speaker. We were dealing with the Bill introduced by the right hon. Member for South Down in the context of the by-election. During the by-election the electorate will wish to make clear by letters, questions and by the ordinary processes available to it that it does not, as was suggested by my right hon. and hon. Friends, support the Bill by an overwhelming majority—a Bill for which they are devoted advocates.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Then what is my hon. Friend frightened about?

Mr. Hogg: I am frightened of nothing; but I object —I am sure that the electorate in the by-election will share my objection—to a misuse of parliamentary time, which is what I believe the electorate in the by-election may believe.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman is called to speak in the subsequent debate, that will be the appropriate time for him to raise the objection that he has voiced.

Mr. Cyril Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) has told us that he is opposed to a misuse of parliamentary time. While the hon. Gentleman has been sitting in his place during points of order I have heard him ask for how long certain Opposition Members wish him to speak and whether it would be all right if he continued until 11 o'clock. Is that not an misuse of parliamentary time?

Mr. Speaker: Fortunately, I cannot hear everything that goes on in the Chamber, even at this end of it.

Mr. Hogg: I have always done my best, Mr. Speaker, to enable you to hear everything that I say. However, on occasions I think it prudent to speak in a somewhat lower voice. I am always anxious, Mr. Speaker, as you know so well, to meet the convenience of the House, the convenience of yourself, the convenience of other hon. Members and especially the convenience of the two Front Benches.

As we are now close to 11 o'clock, I wish to make only one or two more points. I am in favour of an early by-election, but I am not in favour of twisting conventions out of shape. Our conventions and practices are designed to safeguard us all. Despite my enthusiasm for a by-election, I think that the long-established practice of leaving the moving of a writ to the Chief Whip of the party who has suffered the loss of a Member is, on the whole, the best procedure. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bolsover for enabling us to discuss the matter and for reminding us of the power of Back Benchers, but I hope that at the end of the debate—if it is pushed to a Division—the House will decide that the writ should not——

Mr. Ernie Roberts (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that his case, that a writ be issued so that the electorate at Brecon and Radnor can make its views known on the Government's policies, means that he ought to agree that it would be even better if the whole Government resigned and allowed the country to express its views on their policies?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is certainly not an issue in this debate.

Mr. Hogg: I felt that you were likely to take that view, Mr. Speaker, and that it would be improper for me to respond to the hon. Gentleman.

I merely invite the House to take the view that, nothwithstanding the eloquence of the hon. Member for Bolsover, we should not accede to his suggestion.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At business questions yesterday, I supported my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) in pressing the Leader of the House for a statement on Eurolex, the computer database of English, Scottish and European law. The Leader of the House said that he suspected that a statement today would be "trivialising the matter". I give the House my word that, whatever the business today, I would have tried to raise the desperate anxieties of Dr. Norman Price and 52 other sacked members of staff and the need for an urgent referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The matter is urgent because the Eurolex database could be removed and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This sounds like a Standing Order No. 10 application, which we do not have on Fridays. What is the point of order for me? The matter was raised at business questions yesterday and dealt with. There cannot be a point of order for me.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. At business questions yesterday the Leader of the House gave the impression that he would at least contact Trade Ministers on this desperately urgent issue, with a view to a statement being made. I will not abuse your agreement to take my point of order, but will simply list the issues involved.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot do that. The matter was dealt with yesterday. I have had no request from the Government for permission to make a statement. What the hon. Gentleman is doing is totally out of order, and he knows that.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a serious matter. The Leader of the House undertook yesterday to convey to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry a matter that may involve not only the future of computer databases for legal information services, but, by precedent, the growth of information services of any kind in this country. The present action may make it impossible for any computer information service in this country to grow——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is as may be, but we had the matter out in business questions yesterday. The hon.

Gentleman must find another opportunity to raise it. He must not do so on this private Members' motions day. That is totally out of order and I cannot allow it.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I call Mr. Madden.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You and the House will recollect that the Home Secretary confirmed yesterday that a young Tamil had been returned to Sri Lanka by mistake. The Home Secretary said:

"The high commission in Colombo has been asked to contact the person in question".—[*Official Report*, 6 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 435.]

I understand that the Home Office has received telegrams overnight from the high commission in Colombo confirming that the young man has been located.

I have two questions. May I urge the Home Office to make a statement to confirm the facts and what the Home Secretary said yesterday about ordering an urgent and thorough investigation? We need to know the outcome of any such investigation. Secondly, as Speaker and the honorary president of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, will you consider contacting the Speaker of the Sri Lanka Parliament to see whether he will reinforce the assurances given by the President of Sri Lanka that no Tamil seeking entry to this country need have any fear for his well-being?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is enough on that subject. I have had no requests for permission to make a statement on this matter. The hon. Gentleman's second point is not within my responsibilities, which are to this House.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of what was said at business questions yesterday, is it understood that if there is not a referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, the database could easily——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to carry on a discussion that we had at business questions yesterday. I cannot allow that during private Members' time. The Government have not come forward with a statement and I cannot allow this discussion to go on.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that a few words of mine will facilitate the passage of business, because I believe that the House wishes to get on to the issues raised in the motion of my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden).

In respect of the matter raised by the hon. Members for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) and for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I am advised that the merger does not qualify for investigation under the Fair Trading Act. However, it is obviously a matter of great concern and I suggest that we continue the discussion through the usual channels.

11.6 am

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Before the points of order were raised, the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) urged the House to reject the motion. The hon. Gentleman was misguided, because, in effect, he was agreeing that we should not have a by-election in Brecon and Radnor until after the end of this Session. That would be singularly unfortunate.

Although my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) pointed out that this is a sovereign House which is always able to undo things that it has done, I do not believe that the hon. Member for Grantham would suggest that we should go on to even more unusual procedures. Therefore, we should spend a few minutes looking at the principles involved in the motion.

All our rights and privileges as hon. Members stem from the fact that we are elected. They can be rights and privileges only if everyone in the country has the right to participate in elections. Therefore, it must be a fundamental principle that as soon as possible after the death of an hon. Member or after a vacancy is created for other reasons, a by-election should be held so that people have the opportunity to be represented in the House.

However unfortunate it may be that the matter has to be debated today, we should spend some time looking at the principles involved. Anyone who studies *Hansard* will see that there have been many arguments and perhaps wrangles about the way in which by-elections are called.

In the 1960s there was considerable abuse because by-elections were not called until nine or 10 months — sometimes even longer — after a vacancy had been created. That was obviously unsatisfactory. In 1973, a writ was moved to speed up the calling of a by-election and, although the motion was defeated in the House, a Speaker's Conference considered the matter and produced the compromise that is now in operation. However, it is clear from some of the arguments that we have heard today that that compromise has not worked particularly well. Certainly, the procedures for calling by-elections in recesses are particularly unfortunate.

Therefore, I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover, who has suggested that he is moving towards becoming an establishment figure, will look at the practices of establishment figures and try to manoeuvre a deal that would involve the Government giving a clear commitment that the by-election will be called speedily, and certainly by July?

Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover might then consider withdrawing his motion so that no vote was necessary and we would not have to choose between 27 June or 4 July and not having an election until November. Perhaps he would also press that the Leader of the House and other parties should agree, with your approval, Mr. Speaker, that the matter be referred back to an electoral conference so that we can find a procedure for calling by-elections automatically rather than as a result of manoeuvrings between the usual channels. We could have rules under which you, Mr. Speaker, set the procedure in operation automatically.

Mr. Skinner: I wish to remind my hon. Friend that the event on 10 July 1973 to which he referred, when an attempt was made to move a writ for the by-election at Berwick-upon-Tweed, was overtaken when the then Leader of the House moved a motion to move on to the Orders of the Day. As a result, we voted upon the motion to move to Orders of the Day rather than on the moving of the writ.

I agree with my hon. Friend's general outline of the way in which we should proceed with by-elections. I hope that my contribution today will assist. His point about ensuring that the holding of a by-election is not prolonged is uppermost in my mind, as it was in the mind of the person who moved the writ for Berwick-upon-Tweed on behalf

[Mr. Skinner]

of the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party—although that was not really invented then, but was only a small force.

I have taken on board all the points raised by my hon. Friend because I know that he, like me, has been interested in these matters for many years.

Mr. Bennett: I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention. There is a growing belief that there should be an automatic procedure for by-elections. I hope that when the Leader of the House speaks he will give the House a clear indication of the date of the by-election. If he does so, and if he can persuade us that we can look forward to some automatic procedure to resolve these matters in future, we may feel it possible not to vote on a matter that could result in only two choices of by-election date.

11.12 am

Mr. Stephen Dorrell (Loughborough): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), I believe that the House owes a debt of gratitude to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) for providing a relatively rare opportunity to have a full discussion of the proper time for a by-election. As has been suggested by several hon. Members, more often than not the date is agreed in the form of a deal between the Front Benches, from which Back Benchers, by definition, are excluded.

The House will agree that this morning's debate has thrown some light on some important issues about the way in which our democracy functions. It is right and proper that such a debate should take place. Those interested in the proper functioning of parliamentary democracy therefore owe a debt of gratitude to the hon. Member for Bolsover.

Far from being an abuse of the procedures of the House, such a debate strikes at the very heart of what the House is all about. It provides an opportunity to discuss one of the most crucial issues raised by the functioning of parliamentary democracy. The House will understand if I say that it raises in my breast a certain wry amusement to hear the hon. Member for Bolsover give a stirring speech about the urgency of holding a ballot. I hold the elevated, unpaid and utterly powerless post of parliamentary private secretary to the Secretary of State for Energy. That has led me to become something of a connoisseur of the hon. Gentleman's speeches about the proper timing of ballots.

The hon. Gentleman's view on ballots is not consistent. For the past 18 months I have sat behind the Treasury Bench listening to him, on many occasions, rehearsing the arguments that I have come to know almost as well as he knows them, about the propriety of holding a ballot as a result of the decision of the executive of the National Union of Mineworkers to call a national strike.

I believe that this point is relevant to the consideration by the House of the proper timing of a by-election in Brecon and Radnor. It throws some light on the thinking of the person advancing the argument for an immediate ballot in that constituency. His arguments for immediate ballots on important issues have not been entirely consistent.

The argument for an immediate ballot has not been powerfully maintained either by Opposition Members or by those of my hon. Friends who have said that they support an immediate or hasty move towards calling a by-election. There has been what I regard as an unhealthy confusion between haste and democracy. Haste is not necessarily democratic. It is as easy to hold a ballot that is too early as it is to hold one that is too late. That is precisely why, in the legislation surrounding——

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that one powerful reason why the writ should be moved today is the workload that each Member of Parliament has to bear on behalf of his constituents—those who visit the House, who write letters or who come to our surgeries? The longer the delay in the issuance of the writ, the longer that Brecon and Radnor will be deprived of a Member of Parliament. Is that not a wrong element of the enfranchisement of the electorate? Is it not in their interests that there be an early moving of the writ so that they can be properly represented?

Mr. Dorrell: Of course, that is one of the issues that the House must take into account when deciding on the proper time to hold a by-election in Brecon and Radnor. But other issues surround the timing — issues that, presumably, were taken into account when it was decided that there should be a minimum period as well as a maximum period between the dissolution of Parliament and polling day in the calling of a general election. Therefore, it is perfectly possible for the period to be too short as well as to be too long.

Mr. Coleman: May I refer the hon. Gentleman back to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell)? Those of us whose constituencies neighbour Brecon and Radnor are finding that the constituents in Brecon and Radnor are coming into our constituencies. While we are happy to help them, such a position cannot continue because they must be properly represented in Parliament.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman is coming perilously close to suggesting that the date of the by-election in Brecon and Radnor should be decided to suit the convenience of neighbouring Members of Parliament. While I entirely concede that the representation of the constituents of Brecon and Radnor is important, it is also important that when they go to the polls they should understand the choice that is available to them. It is important that the candidates presenting themselves for election in that constituency have had the opportunity to deploy the arguments which, in the end, the election is all about.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: On the points raised by the hon. Members for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) and for Neath (Mr. Coleman), I can tell my hon. Friend that my hon. Friends who represent Welsh constituencies have been helping out with the constituency burdens in Brecon and Radnor. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson) has been dealing with the correspondence left by our late colleague, Mr. Hooson, and actually spent last weekend in the constituency.

Mr. Dorrell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that what he has said is in the best tradition of the House of Commons. Hon. Members on both sides of the House would wish to ensure that where urgent constituency cases arise in a constituency that is, for the moment, not represented in the House, we should all do our best to ensure that the constituents do not suffer.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Will the hon. Gentleman concede and clearly state that this has nothing to do with sharing the burden of a constituency? The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) was that, by delaying the election, we are effectively disfranchising a whole constituency comprising about 60,000 people. Will the hon. Gentleman admit that?

Mr. Dorrell: I shall not admit that, because I am arguing not for indefinite delay but for sufficient delay to allow the issues that will be at stake in the by-election to be properly argued and deployed by the candidates. The issues that will be at stake are not simple. Brecon and Radnor is not a simple homogeneous constituency and it will take a significant period for the arguments to be deployed and the candidates to make themselves known.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): To take this point to its logical conclusion, there could be an argument that by-elections should be held after the party conferences, because those conferences will give the people of Brecon and Radnor the opportunity to see the various leaders on television displaying their talent or lack of talent. That might be a good thing. I do not know; I am not arguing one way or the other. It is a point that the hon. Gentleman should consider.

Mr. Dorrell: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his open mind on this point, although I cannot help but feel that it might be regarded as unduly partisan for a Tory Member to argue that the by-election should wait until after the Labour party conference.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): The hon. Gentleman said — I think that I have followed his argument correctly—that it was necessary to have sufficient time before calling the by-election to enable the issues to be considered and the candidates to establish themselves. Why is this necessary in a single by-election when it is never the case when a general election is called? I should have thought that the same arguments apply.

Mr. Dorrell: It is in the nature of by-elections that they are called more suddenly than most general elections.

Mr. Dubs: Not true.

Mr. Dorrell: It is true. Few general elections are called with the public completely unaware of them. In a general election the issues are more generally deployed in the national press than is the case in a by-election.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Dorrell: Hon Members on both sides of the House wish to participate in the debate. I want to finish this argument so that other hon. Members have the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Coleman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dorrell: I have given way to the hon. Gentleman once already.

The constituency of Brecon and Radnor is not a simple constituency. I know it perhaps better than most hon. Members, because I held my first paid employment in the town of Brecon. The southern end of the constituency contains people who work in the coal mines of south Wales and the northern end contains people involved in hill farming and agriculture. It is almost inconceivable that any candidate, however accomplished his previous career, will have a background and degree of recognition in that constituency sufficient to allow his views and the electorate's reaction to them to be established without a reasonable period of debate during the election campaign.

Mr. Wigley *rose*——

Mr. Dorrell: I am drawing my remarks to a close.

I commend the hon. Member for Bolsover for giving the House the opportunity to discuss the proper time scale in which a by-election should take place. I hope that, in reaching its decision, the House will not confuse haste with democracy and will ensure that the decision is made in sufficient time to enable the constituents to be properly represented in the House. I hope that the matter is not so speeded up that the issues and personalities in the campaign are not given a proper airing.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I propose to call one more Back Bencher, and then I shall invite the Front Bench spokesmen to speak. The House has had a good run on this matter.

11.24 am

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I believe that the electors of Brecon and Radnor will be eternally grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I say that with some knowledge, unlike some hon. Members who have spoken in the debate. From 1979 until I was elected to the House last year, I represented in the European Parliament the electorate of Brecon and Radnor. I believe that I have particular knowledge of the electors' wishes, especially since part of that constituency is now part of my constituency of Cynon Valley.

Mr. Colman: In view of my hon. Friend's experience as the MEP for that area and the fact that her constituency borders Brecon and Radnor, does she agree that we are looking to the convenience not of candidates but of electors? Brecon and Radnor contains many villages. Does she agree that these villages require individual attention and that, therefore, it is essential that they have representation by a Member as soon as possible?

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank my hon. Friend for making that important point. That is precisely why the Opposition favour the motion to issue a writ for this by-election so that the election can take place as soon as possible.

Mr. Beith *rose*——

Mrs. Clwyd: During the past 12 months, Brecon and Radnor has had the highest unemployment rate of any Wales constituency. That speaks for itself.

Mr. Beith: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Clwyd: In a moment.

I pay tribute, as other hon. Members have done, to Mr. Tom Hooson, the former Member for Brecon and Radnor. I worked with him for five years. As might be expected we did not always see eye to eye. In fact, he took considerable dislike to a poll that I took in the constituency on attitudes towards the Common Market. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover rightly said that the constituents in Brecon and Radnor have become increasingly hostile towards the Common Market.

Much reference has been made by hon. Members to the importance of having a Welsh-speaking candidate in

[Mrs. Clwyd]

Brecon and Radnor. As a Welsh speaker, I do not believe that it is necessary in that constituency, because only 17 per cent. of the electorate speak Welsh. The EEC has acted in a particularly punitive manner towards an important industry in the constituency — Welsh whisky. The production of Welsh whisky could have been a very important industry.

Mr. Frank Cook: That's the spirit.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am told that some people believe that Welsh whisky is superior to Scotch whisky. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] The Common Market objected not to the whisky's flavour but to the fact that it was labelled in the Welsh language. It was called not Welsh whisky but Welsh chwisgi. The Common Market said, "This important product of Brecon and Radnor cannot possibly be called Welsh whisky. It must have a bilingual label." The producers of Welsh whisky were forced——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a fascinating matter, and one that I shall personally look into. However, the motion is about a writ for an English by-election.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Correction—a Welsh by-election.

Mrs. Clwyd: I advise those who are thinking of spending some time during the next few months in this particularly beautiful constituency that, although it is not essential to speak Welsh, it is essential to be able to pronounce Welsh place names.

I make this point to hon. Members who intend spending time canvassing in the election. It is important, not to be able to pronounce Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwll-llandysiliogogogoch, but at least to be able to say Llandrindod Wells, Builth Wells and Brycheiniog, which is the Welsh name for Brecon, and Ystradgynlais, which is a very important town in the constituency of Brecon and Radnor because of its coal mining connections. There are strong feelings in that town about the rundown of the coal industry and the effect of lack of investment in the coal industry in Wales. That is a bit of advice to those who may be considering going to the by-election in the near future.

Mr. Adley: In view of what Mr. Speaker has just said about the hon. Lady being the last Back Bencher to be called in this debate, does she realise that she has a heavy responsibility? I may be deprived of the opportunity to concentrate on the transport aspects in the constituency. Therefore, will the hon. Lady, in her capacity as a former Member of the European Assembly and the representative there for the Brecon and Radnor constituency among others, say what importance she attaches to the continuance of the central Wales line as a railway artery through the constituency?

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank the hon. Gentleman for making that point. It is of great significance to the economy of the whole of Mid-Wales, and particularly Brecon and Radnor, that that railway continues in its present form. Not only the railway, but a good bus transport service is needed, and the constituents of Brecon and Radnor are most concerned about those services.

There is another liquid of great importance in this by-election which I have no doubt will be referred to continually throughout the campaign, and that is water.

Mr. Heffer: Can my hon. Friend tell us a little more about Welsh whisky? I can think of nothing better than going to Hay-on-Wye, browsing round the bookshops and then nipping into the local boozer for some Welsh whisky. Is that possible?

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that point. I would be glad to provide him with a sample of that whisky, and one for you, Mr. Speaker. Once you have sampled this Welsh whisky, even if you have another favourite brand, you will soon switch to this one.

Mr. Wigley: Will the hon. Lady confirm that this particularly good whisky is manufactured by a former Plaid Cymru candidate in the constituency? I do not know whether his name has been selected for this by-election but Mr. Dafydd Gittins has had considerable difficulty because of the EEC and deserves all support in the by-election to ensure fair play in the future.

Mrs. Clwyd: The fact that this Plaid Cymru producer is a good publicist does not detract from the whisky. He obviously has an ally in the hon. Member.

Water is of particular importance in this constituency. It has some of the largest reservoirs in the whole of Wales and it supplies Birmingham. Unfortunately, the electors of Brecon and Radnor, like many other people in Wales, pay more for their water than people in Birmingham. This is a strong issue and a bone of contention in the area.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): The people of Birmingham are extremely grateful to Wales for the beautiful flow of sweet water that we have. If the payments that we make to the people of Wales are not adequate, I am sure that some arrangement can be made.

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank my hon. Friend for that generous offer. I am sure that it will be looked at with great favour by the electors of Brecon and Radnor, who feel particularly aggrieved by the difference in pricing.

Mr. Beith: Does not the hon. Lady realise that the electors of Brecon and Radnor may just as well be aggrieved by these proceedings, which are not designed to result in the issuing of a writ, to be brought to an end by other proceedings, but are designed to delay the by-election? Will they not also be aggrieved by the fact that they see the House of Commons being prevented from discussing issues on which either side may have strong views by a deliberate diversion?

Mrs. Clwyd: I am pointing out some of the issues that are of pressing importance in the impending by-election, and to show why I think that the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover should be backed by all hon. Members.

A massive increase in water charges, which recently came into force, has made water a political issue in Wales once again. That is why we should pay considerable attention to the problem.

Brecon is renowned for another important production —Brecon bubbly. Recently, we have had considerable problems with the water supply in Norman Shaw South. As a show of support for an area that is suffering from massive unemployment and for a developing industry, we may introduce the beautiful Brecon-produced water known as Brecon bubbly into the restaurants of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Although I hope that the hon. Lady is right, what she is saying is going rather wide of the by-election.

Mrs. Clwyd: I respect your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Tom Hooson was a perceptive man. However, he objected to the poll on the EEC that I carried out in the constituency. It showed that the majority of people were worried about the EEC's policies and the way that they were affecting the constituents of Brecon and Radnor. Mr. Hooson said in a debate on the economy and employment of Wales:

"I would have very little confidence in the competence of even the present Cabinet to create jobs."—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1982; Vol. 23, c. 320.]

His words have, unfortunately, been shown to be true.

Mr. Hooson said—to those who will be considering whether to support the motion, this may be of some relevance—in his maiden speech:

"In numerous post-war elections my party strove hard to win this seat. It is a remarkable tribute to Mr. Roderick and Lord Watkins, his predecessor . . . that between them they successfully fended us off for over 40 years. The best prizes in life are those that are hard to achieve, and this prize is quite simply the loveliest constituency in the country . . . I invite hon. Member to take their holidays in the constituency if they wait until we have completed the Brecon bypass."—[*Official Report*, 23 May 1979; Vol 967, c. 1156.]

The Brecon bypass is one of the few roads in Wales that have been completed while the Government have been in office. The time is now appropriate for hon. Members involved in the by-election to go to that constituency and use that wonderful bypass, unless they happen to be on the right side of the House, when they will obviously wish to linger a while in Brecon and Radnor.

It gives me great pleasure to support the motion. It is in the interests of the constituents of Brecon and Radnor, particularly the aggrieved farmers, who are suffering from the effects of milk quotas and the other cuts imposed by the Government to hold a by-election as soon as possible so that they can show their support for the Labour candidate.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Peter Shore.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I listened to your statement before the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) addressed the House that she would be the last Back Bencher that you intended to call in the debate. Normally, when under the ordinary procedures of the House we are engaged in debate, we know exactly when Front-Bench spokesmen will rise. Today, we have had very little warning. May I ask whether, on this very important matter of democracy in practice and at work, it is your intention to call those Back Benchers who feel deeply about representing their views to the Front-Bench spokesmen? There are strong feelings among Back Benchers about the moving of a writ and the representation in the House of constituents who at present are unrepresented. Will you be calling Back Benchers after the interventions of the two Front Bench spokesmen?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) is an experienced Chairman. In my view he should listen to what right hon. Members on the two Front Benches say. I hope that the hon. Gentleman was here at the beginning of the debate. I draw his attention to what I said then, which was that I hoped that proceedings on these matters would not be artificially prolonged and that today's proceedings would be conducted in our best traditions. If I now call the Front-Bench spokesmen, I think that the hon. Gentleman may be satisfied.

11.41 am

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): This has been an important and very interesting debate, and I can understand why other hon. Members wish to make further contributions to it.

Like others, I listened with interest and enjoyment to what my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said in his characteristically pungent speech when moving the motion for the writ for a by-election at Brecon and Radnor.

Hon. Members will know that the custom and practice of the House is for any new writ to be moved by the Chief Whip of the party to which the Member vacating the seat belonged. That is not a rule of the House, but it is and has been a long-entrenched custom. The question that has been very properly debated is whether we should depart from that custom on this occasion.

As I listened to the debate and the reasons advanced for holding an early by-election by moving the writ today, I found the arguments very compelling. They were put most persuasively. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has good reason to suspect that there is considerable nervousness on the part of the Government about the holding of an early by-election. [HON. MEMBERS : "Rubbish."] They have every reason to be nervous, because there is no doubt that the outcome of an election will be determined in part by their neglect of the rural areas, especially Welsh rural areas, to which attention was drawn in a debate earlier this week. There is a clear and adverse swing against them occurring in the country as a whole, and this has been enormously reinforced, as Government supporters are beginning slowly to recognise, by statements about the future dismantling of so much of the welfare state.

Mr. Adley: I do not want to trespass on the party political part of the right hon. Gentleman's comments, but may I take him back to what he said a moment ago, because he moved rather quickly from the procedural aspect of the motion? If some of us who had hoped to catch Mr. Speaker's eye are not able to do so—we may have to wait for another occasion — will the right hon. Gentleman say from his experience whether, if today's motion is lost, it is open to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) or any other hon. Member at any time to seek again to move the writ for this by-election?

Mr. Shore: I bow to authorities greater than my own on this, but that is my understanding.

I want to return to the reason why I found the arguments for the moving of the writ and an early by-election so compelling. I have mentioned what I believe to be the undoubted anxieties of the Government. For several months now they have been anxious to avoid by-elections whenever possible. However, I have been impressed by the fact that hon. Members representing all parties have supported the moving of the writ. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) gave it his support on behalf of Plaid Cymru, the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones), a Welsh Conservative, said that he was in favour of going ahead, and many Opposition Members obviously said the same. The only exception to this almost

[Mr. Shore]

unanimous view was the Liberal Chief Whip, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who seemed not at all anxious that we should even debate whether the writ should be moved. I can only assume that this reflects the undoubted anxiety that his party has because it has not even worked out its own arrangements with its alleged alliance partner in the area.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I am afraid that the right hon. Gentleman misquoted me quite dramatically in that I sought to reassure the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and the House that the Conservative party in Wales was not reluctant and was looking forward to an early by-election but that most emphatically I did not support the moving of the writ today, because I felt that these matters should be conducted in the proper way.

Mr. Skinner: It is easy to tell that he is a lawyer.

Mr. Shore: In that case, I take it that the hon. Gentleman has given the motion his qualified support. He is very much in favour of the matter not being delayed beyond the minimum time reasonable for the election to be held. I take that to be broadly in support of the motion that the writ should be moved at an early date.

Mr. Beith: It may be that from where the right hon. Gentleman is sitting he was unable to see that, before he rose to speak, I sought to catch Mr. Speaker's eye so that I could assert that Liberals would like the by-election as soon as possible so that our candidate could win it and that this morning's proceedings were not intended to bring that about, as he knows perfectly well.

Mr. Shore: Unfortunately, the hon. Gentleman did not make that speech. If he had made it, he would have found himself contradicting what he said in his earlier intervention.

As I say, I was impressed by the obvious support from all parties, with the exception of the Liberals, that the writ should be moved today. I was also impressed and was bound to be by the fact that so many hon. Members who represent Welsh constituencies and who know Wales backed the moving of the writ. I refer of course to the hon. Member for Caernarfon, my hon. Friend for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and, if he will allow me to, the hon. Member for Cardiff, North.

There is undoubtedly a strong feeling in the Principality and among the Members of Parliament who are associated with it and who represent it, that there should be an early election. It is my belief from all that I hear from the area that the people of Brecon and Radnor want an early election, both because they want to be represented here in Parliament and because they wish to have the opportunity to pass their own judgment upon this Government. I think that the country would wish that also. I think that there is a strong wish throughout Britain that an opportunity should be provided to fire a warning shot across the bows of the Government as they plunge ever further into controversial and damaging policies in this Parliament.

My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) referred to this. In the past there have been scandalous delays in the holding of by-elections. In July 1973 a former Member, Mr. Dick Taverne, whose general political conduct we in the Labour party have good reason to condemn and deplore, did a useful service to the House by drawing attention to the conventions of the time in the case of the Berwick-upon-Tweed by-election. He said that, unless a move was made, there would be a delay of no less than five months before that by-election could be held. He attempted to move a writ and to bring forward the by-election to make sure that the people of that constituency were not left unrepresented for such a long time.

In that same debate in July 1973 I recall the leader of the Liberal party drawing attention to a longer delay of six months affecting the by-election in Orpington in 1962, because the Government Chief Whip at that time was too frightened to move the writ. All that contrasts sharply with other occasions. For example, in June 1973 only three weeks were allowed to elapse before the by-election in Ripon took place.

The defence of the then Leader of the House our former colleague, Mr. James Prior — [HON. MEMBERS: "What?"]—I meant the former Leader of the House and our continuing colleague in the House the right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior). He said in the debate in 1973 that if Mr. Taverne moved the motion, it could not be moved again that Session. He therefore proposed an amendment to the effect that the House should pass to the Orders of the Day, which was carried. Mr. Taverne returned to the matter on 19 July 1973, but the debate was adjourned without a Division.

A most important factor influencing hon. Members on both sides of the House at that time was the work then going on in the Speaker's Conference, which was sitting at the time. It was properly argued that the issuing of writs and the delay in holding by-elections should be a subject for its consideration and report, and that the House should await the outcome.

That was a very important Speaker's Conference. I remind the House that it reported in November of that year and put forward several guidelines of which we should take note today. The most important were, first:

"The motion for a writ for a by-election should normally be moved within three months of a vacancy arising".

and second:

"The total period (from vacancy to the moving of the writ) should not be more than four months."

The Speaker's Conference also considered the custom of allowing the party that formerly held the seat to move the new writ and thus decide the date of the by-election. That was found to be reasonable. I have no reason to believe that any of the parties in the House have departed from that broad conclusion since then. No change was recommended, except for when a vacancy occurred during the recess.

No formal resolution was made to give legal standing to those guidelines from the Speaker's Conference. However, the rule has been observed in almost every by-election since 1974.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, because the House made no formal resolution on that matter, several other matters that were considered by that Speaker's Conference, especially the calling of by-elections during recesses, were never altered? Therefore, is there not a strong argument for having another Speaker's Conference so that this formal agreement and the other recommendations that came from the Speaker's Conference can be made part of the Standing Orders of the House?

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend makes a serious point, but he will forgive me if I do not give him an off-the-cuff reply. I wish to consider his suggestion more carefully.

In most cases, by-elections have been held well within the time limit recommended by the Speaker's conference and, as we know, the vacancy in Brecon and Radnor occurred on the death of its Member on 8 May, which was only one month ago. If my hon. Friend has reason to fear that the Government will not move the writ for a by-election within three months of that date, it could well be right for us to support his motion. However, having listened carefully to what he said, I believe that on this occasion at least he has not established his anxieties with the evidence that I would need to convince me that the by-election would be unreasonably delayed. Although I do not know when the Government intend to move the writ, I have no evidence that they wish to break with the established convention, but that is a matter on which the Leader of the House could easily give us a cast-iron assurance.

For that reason, and because in a later debate today I shall try to persuade the House not to change its established rules and procedures without the fullest possible consideration and discussion, I urge my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover to withdraw his motion.

Mr. Skinner: As I said at the outset, the main reason for my moving the writ was to test the opinion of the House. I also said that I might not secure the approval of the House for the withdrawal of my motion. If that were the case, other action would have to be taken. Of course, if we are assured of a relatively early by-election, my purpose will have been achieved. Another major reason for doing it was to show Back-Bench Members that they have the power to move writs for by-elections. Perhaps in the future other hon. Members will take a hand in matters when the Government of the day, of whichever colour, seem to be unwilling to move a writ.

I shall make the necessary withdrawal — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] — but I should also say that, if the House objects, I can do nothing about it. I am trying to be obliging today. Mostly it is revolution, but today it is roses, so I shall make the necessary withdrawal—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Do you hear the voices, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have not put the Question yet.

Mr. Skinner: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Hon. Members: No.

11.59 am

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I am sorry that the desire of the hon. Member for Bolsover, (Mr. Skinner), who has had such a good morning, to withdraw his motion has been thwarted by the House. I hope that on further reflection the House will feel that the matter has been considerably canvassed and that we should proceed to consider other business.

I thank the hon. Member for Bolsover for opening his remarks with generous tributes to Tom Hooson who, during his time in the House, earned and deserved a friendship which ranged across all parties. I had the privilege of knowing him long before he came to the House, and I felt great personal sadness on his death.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) reminded the House that the debate has been a repeat of one held in 1973, which was initiated by Mr. Dick Taverne. It is an interesting commentary on the changing nature of politics that the hon. Member for Bolsover so easily sits with the Taverne arguments in this respect. The twin faces of Socialism doubtless will be fashioned and reconsidered as necessity requires. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the skill with which he is becoming a member of the Establishment.

I have only two observations to make, because the debate has to some extent answered itself. First, the time may have come to resolve the matter so that we can move to other issues for consideration later this morning. Secondly, how one resolves the question of calling by-elections is an important issue. As the right hon. Gentleman said, we are served by established conventions in this respect. Since 1911 it has been the convention that the Chief Whip of the party holding the seat should move the issuing of the writ, and that the writ should be moved within four months of the vacancy occuring. On the latter, I assure the House that there is no question of the Government doing anything other than abiding by that convention. On the former, my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary having the responsibility for moving the writ on behalf of the Government, which is being challenged, the House is invited this morning to substitute the hon. Member for Bolsover for my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary. With all the generosity in the world, I do not call that a fair switch. I cannot recommend that to the House.

On this occasion I suggest that we remain with our normal conventions and, therefore, I advise the House not to accept the motion. To negative the motion would, however, prevent it from being moved again in the present Session, unless the House agreed to overrule that decision. Therefore, I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House do pass to the Orders of the Day."

12.3 pm

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): I rise to oppose the amendment with all the strength that I can command and whatever eloquence I can muster. I oppose it for two reasons. First, it derives from a point put a little while ago by the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch), who asked whether it would be proper for more Back Bench Members to express their views upon the matter which was before us—that is, the main Question. He was right. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that when you called my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) to speak, a considerable number of Back Bench Members on both sides of the House sought to catch your eye to speak. I know that we have spent some time on it, but this is a matter of great importance and I should have liked to make some observations on it. At least one dozen other hon. Members, divided pretty equally among the parties, also wanted to speak. Those hon. Members should have a chance to say what they want to say on the main Question before we proceed to the Orders of the Day.

My second reason for objecting to the amendment is that the Orders of the Day contain a motion which is a gross abuse of the privileges of the House and which contains the seeds of considerable danger — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Heffer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that the whole House wants to hear what my hon. Friend has to say. He is making an important point and there are all sorts of conversations going on. May we be allowed to hear what my hon. Friend is saying?

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The House does not want to hear what he has to say.

Mr. Speaker: I could hear quite clearly what the hon. Gentleman said. I am sorry if the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) could not.

Mr. Mikardo: You probably did not hear it, Mr. Speaker, but the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) said that the House does not wish to hear what I have to say. Any hon. Member who does not wish to hear what I have to say, including the hon. Lady, is free to depart. I shall be so arrogant as to assume that those who choose to remain rather than go for a coffee or a pre-lunch sherry do so because they want to hear what I have to say.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Lady does not wish to hear what the hon. Gentleman is saying; she wishes to remain to see whether a more intelligent speech comes next.

Mr. Mikardo *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Member is lost for words, but I hope that the House will keep the temperature down. That is very important.

Mr. Mikardo: I was about to say, when you kindly intervened, Mr. Speaker, that I thought that you and the House would take the view that that type of observation was not worthy of being credited with a rejoinder. It was intended to raise the temperature, and it lowered the tone of our proceedings. We can live without yah-boo stuff in the House, whether it comes from a male or a female hon. Member. Yah-boo stuff just lets us all down.

I shall continue to make my serious point, irrespective of interruptions. There were complaints earlier from my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and from the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that the motion was an abuse of the time of the House. I should like to tell them, and anybody else who thinks like them, that those who have concurred with and connived in the use of a private Member's motion not to express the view of the hon. Member but to alter the arrangements for the business of the House and who then talk about others abusing the procedures of the House should remember the proverb about people in glasshouses not throwing stones. I oppose the amendment and our proceeding to the Orders of the Day because one of those orders is a clear abuse of the privileges and procedures of the House.

Mr. Stefan Terlezki (Cardiff, West): What is this?

Mr. Mikardo: The order also sets a dangerous precedent. In the next Session of Parliament the chance of a private Member's Bill being adequately debated in the House could depend not on the place of that Bill in the ballot, as it does under our regular rule, but on whether the promoter can persuade an hon. Member who has drawn a place in the ballot for private Member's motions to use that opportunity to create a timetable or non-timetable motion for the Bill. That is a fiddle; there is no other word for it. It is a crooked piece of procedure and we ought not to condone it. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members usually need a little rest with a meal and some other refreshment before they get into this public school yah-boo attitude. They must have had a more than usually expansive breakfast.

We must be very careful about this matter because it could seriously interfere with the rights of private Members and the chance of private Members' Bills getting through. I believe that there is a case for examining whether there should be more private Members' time than there has been in recent Sessions, but that will come afterwards. If we accept the precedent in the motion of the hon. Member for Brighton, Kempton (Mr. Bowden), I believe that in the next Session private Members' Bills will not get the priority that they should have under the balloting method that we have always adopted and which, until it is changed—if it is ever changed, which I doubt—governs and always has governed our procedures on private Members' Bills.

Just think of all the undignified arrangements that there could be in the next Session. Whoever draws first place in the ballot for private Members' motions will be faced with a queue of Members with Bills at various stages asking him to put down a business motion to facilitate the passage of their Bills. That Member will then have to choose between the various Bills and the real object of private Members' motions will disappear.

It has been one of the great traditions of the House that Members lucky enough to draw a place in the ballot for private Members' motions express an opinion and ask the House to concur in that opinion about some important issue of policy which specifically affects their constituents. As we know, private Members' motions are very often concerned with the particular problems of individual constituencies.

If we reached the Orders of the Day on this occasion, it would be rather nice if the first two motions could be disposed of quickly so that we can proceed to the third motion which relates to conditions in Brighton, and especially in Kemptown. That would allow the hon. Member for Kemptown to do his duty by his constituents, who must be wondering why the hon. Gentleman has not used this great opportunity which comes at most once in a Parliament. I have been here for 35 years, but I have never yet drawn a place in the ballot. His constituents must be wondering why, having done so well, he has not taken advantage of it in order to seek policy changes which would benefit his constituents.

Mr. Adley: Does not the hon. Gentleman consider that he may have underestimated the danger? He appears to assume that the collusion which might take place with somebody who has been successful in the ballot would be restricted to that person and to the person who came top of the ballot. May I put to him an alternative proposition which could be a good deal worse. The hon. Gentleman, who is an experienced Member of Parliament, knows that one does not have to win a place in the ballot to present a Bill. The hon. Gentleman, or any hon. Member, can present a Bill for First Reading at any time. It is a very simple procedure. Far from the collusion having to depend upon an hon. Member who has been successful in a ballot working with the hon. Member who has been successful in the ballot for private Members' Bills, it could be much more sinister if the hon. Member who was successful in the ballot introduced for First Reading a Bill upon any

subject that he chose. That would be an even greater corruption of the parliamentary procedure than that to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Mr. Mikardo: I was coming to that point. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) for making it. He has made it perhaps more clearly than I could have done. Therefore, I shall not abuse the time of the House by repeating what the hon. Gentleman said. There is a danger that this could be done with ten-minute Bills. All one would have to do would be to get a ten-minute Bill through the House unopposed and then go to an hon. Friend who had won first place in the ballot and get him to put down a business motion for that day. It would mean that ten-minute Bills which were passed on the nod in a thin House at midnight on a Wednesday could jump the queue ahead of all the balloted private Members' Bills. The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to this danger, and I am grateful to him for doing so.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Does the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) accept that there is another danger to which he has not yet referred —that the Government of the day could use this as a precedent? They could use the motion to introduce Government legislation by this means, which would prejudice private Members' legislation.

Mr. Mikardo: I do not know what divine inspiration has descended from Heaven upon Conservative Members. It is manifest that some of them have become mind readers. Like his hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch, the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) has anticipated precisely the point that I was about to make. It is within the knowledge of all hon. Members that occasionally Government Whips have been known sub rosa to seek to influence the course of private Members' business. They are not supposed to do so. I was very shocked when for the first time in the last Parliament, shortly after 1979, a Conservative Member asked me to pair on a private Member's motion. He was a new Member of Parliament. I said, "You cannot pair on private Members' business because you cannot be whipped on it." He said, "I've been." I was shocked. As the hon. Member for Grantham rightly said, there is great danger in this procedure. It is because the motion, which forms part of the Orders of the Day, opens the floodgates to that sort of procedure that I oppose the motion.

Mr. Nellist: I accept that my hon. Friend has a far greater knowledge of procedure than I have. He may well have noticed that there is an amendment on the Order Paper in my name and that of the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). It is designed to bring before the House today the Minimum Wages Etc Bill, to provide a minimum wage of £115 a week for the 8 million workers —one third of the work force—who are on low pay.

I accept my hon. Friend's arguments about precedent and the desirability or otherwise of that precedent, but will he agree that there are certain Labour Back Benchers who, if the precedent is set, will be more than happy to keep the House sitting for the whole weekend if that will mean that 8 million workers can have a decent rate of pay?

Mr. Mikardo: Here there are signs of yet another danger. My hon. Friend has referred to the amendment that he has tabled to the motion of the hon. Member for Kemptown. As we all know, the selection of amendments is within the discretion of Mr. Speaker. Therefore, in a situation such as my hon. Friend envisaged, Mr. Speaker would be faced with the task of having to decide between a number of different private Members' Bills and whether they should be given special time for debate. I am sure that neither you, Mr. Speaker, nor any of your successors—may the first of them be long distant—want to be faced with the obligation of having to make that choice.

Mr. Dorrell: I fear that the hon. Gentleman may have mislaid a page of his notes, because there is a further danger that he has not yet covered and that he might want to mention. I refer to the pressure that is brought to bear on hon. Members by outside interest groups. We are all familiar with the letters that are received by people who win high places in the ballot for private Members' Bills every November. The pressure groups outside are well aware that, depending on the result of that ballot, that is the one time of the year when a private Member has a realistic chance of introducing a Bill that will get on to the statute book.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if the precedent were accepted and became a permanent part of the parliamentary process, every six weeks, when there is a ballot for private Member's motions, all those pressure groups would immediately write to hon. Members commending particular measures which it would be possible for a successful Member to introduce under the timetable motion proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden)?

Mr. Mikardo: What the hon. Gentleman says is right, but I would not look upon it as a grave danger, because I think that hon. Members are grown-up people and should be willing to deal sensibly with pressures upon them in relation to what they conceive to be the merits. I know that what the hon. Gentleman says is right because, although I have never drawn a place in a ballot for private Members' motions, I once drew No. 2 in the ballot for private Members' Bills, and I had 83 different proposed Bills presented to me in the course of 72 hours, some of them with huge bundles of documents which had obviously taken months to prepare. It is a problem, but I do not regard it as a danger.

Mr. Dorrell: I am sure that it is right to say that hon. Members can resist the pressures, but surely the hon. Gentleman should consider the effect on the groups outside. It is one thing for a group to know that once a year it has to make the sort of effort to which I referred. It is quite another thing every six weeks to have to organise and present an argument to the House of Commons. Under the present system it happens once a year, and if pressure groups are unsuccessful they know that they have to wait another year.

It has become increasingly evident while I have been speaking—not so much from what I have said as from the helpful and constructive interventions of hon. Members — that the procedure contained within the motion tabled by the hon. Member for Kemptown opens a whole can of worms. On those grounds, therefore, we should not proceed to the Orders of the Day. I apologise to any hon. Member who finds that my speech has been of a lower intellectual quality than his or her standard of speech, but I can only do my best, and I rest my case.

12.25 pm

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): Yesterday, when I addressed a question to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, I was at a loss for words because they were not my words; they were those of Shakespeare. I shall not weary the House by doing that now. I know what I want to say today.

I am glad that I have caught your eye, Mr. Speaker, because I was worried that we would move to the business of the House before we had properly considered the matter which I believe to be of much greter importance—the moving of the writ for the by-election in Brecon and Radnor. I speak as a Back Bencher who is reluctant to give ground to anyone on the Front Benches, much as I respect the wisdom of leaving some matters to the judgment of the Front Bench.

I listened to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) recommend to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that he should withdraw his motion. I do not agree with that. I feel that we should have an opportunity today to consider a matter of the greatest importance — the representation in this Parliament of constituents deprived of such representation by the death of an hon. Member.

I should like to pay my tribute to the late Tom Hooson whom I so greatly respected, not just as a friend but as a wise counsellor in my party, and for his political activities here. He was a man of great diligence and activity in his constituency. The constituency is now deprived of the work of a Member of Parliament. I am not content to leave that matter in the hands of the Patronage Secretary without some debate.

For the first time that I can recollect in nearly 20 years, we have had a full debate about why there should be representation of all electors all the time in this Parliament. I abhor a vacuum, and there is a vacuum when there is even one person missing in the House. I am not interested in the 80 who sit on the Front Bench and have Government appointments, I am interested in the 650 Members. There should be 650 Members of Parliament to represent the electors.

It may be suggested that I have no right to interfere with judgments that are of importance to the Principality of Wales. I have no connection with Wales but I have a peculiar understanding of some of its problems. When I rose this morning on a point of order you referred to me, Mr. Speaker, as one of your panel of Chairmen of Committees. In a way, I represent you, Mr. Speaker, in Committee. I had the great and peculiar honour some months ago of chairing the Welsh Grand Committee. I was informed particularly and even peculiarly of the problems which face the people of Wales and their representatives in this place. It was a valuable experience for me. When I heard that it was felt by some that the interests of the electors of Brecon and Radnor should at least be aired in a debate I wanted to participate in it.

Ms. Clare Short: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there are two ways in which constituents can fail to be represented in this place? They cease to be represented when there is a delay in moving a writ for a by-election. Secondly, they would cease properly to be represented if a procedure were used which tied us all down and kept us in the House throughout weekends. That would mean that we would be unable to return to our constituencies to represent the interests of our people. We must be able to meet them and to discuss their problems and troubles. We should not move on to the Orders of the Day. If we do so, we shall be in danger of diminishing our ability to represent our constituents. I speak for myself and the other 649 Members.

Mr. Crouch: I accept what the hon. Lady has said. She has brought us to the nub of the issue. I agree that it would be wrong for us to move on to consider the Orders of the Day. Following the initiative of the hon. Member for Bolsover, we should consider the writ and give it proper priority. The hon. Gentleman's move was not precipitate but it would be precipitate of us to move quickly to the other business, which would lead to many disadvantages for Members and electors. To do so would produce real disadvantages in the practice and working of democracy in this place. We should not do that. We should not even give ourselves the opportunity of doing so.

Perhaps we should provide an opportunity for consideration to be given to the procedure that has led to the appearance on the Order Paper of the motion of my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden). We have a Procedure Committee and it could properly consider the innovation that has been brought before us by my hon. Friend, who, aided by some of his hon. Friends and, no doubt, by Opposition Members, has dreamed up the idea of prolonging the sitting of the House and, by the actions of one or two Members, enabling it to consider business over the weekend. If this procedure is adopted, we shall not be in our constituencies on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Mr. Nellist: The hon. Gentleman has given reasons why there should be a full attendance in this place. There is an additional reason for the lack of attendance that has nothing to do with the replacement of deceased Members and the moving of writs. I refer to the part-time nature of many hon. Members who moonlight in other jobs. Perhaps we should consider moving a motion that states that a Member of this place should have only one job and that that job should be the representation of his or her constituents.

Mr. Crouch: The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to introduce a separate debate on that issue if he is lucky in drawing No. 1 place in the Ballot.

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will agree that we have overlooked another important aspect. We have been talking about the difficulties which face us as Members of this place, but we have not discussed the difficulties that face the staff. With only a couple of days' notice, they could be kept here over weekends. This would obviously infringe their rights to leisure time at the weekends. They already work enough unsocial hours. They would be on a nerve-wracking edge if they did not know whether they would have to remain in the House over weekends. I know that the House and its wishes take precedence over these considerations, but surely the interests of the staff should be taken into account and, therefore, we should not reach the motion of the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden).

Mr. Crouch: I think that sometimes both Front Benchers and Back Benchers neglect to consider the servants of the House, who serve us so magnificently and diligently without so much as a whimper of complaint. They do not have the Floor of the House to make such

complaints. We should consider them and how we put them to disadvantage—even inefficiency—by making it almost impossible for them to carry out their task.

Inconvenience is caused not only to the servants of this House, but to the servant of my house — my wife. *[Interruption.]* I phoned her last night and she said, "Will you be in for dinner?" I said, "I do not know." She said, "What about breakfast on Saturday?" I said, "I do not know." She asked, "Should I buy a joint for Saturday lunch?" I said, "I do not know." She asked, "What about Saturday supper?" I said, "I do not know."

Sunday is a day of rest and the day of the family luncheon. It is impossible for me to decide what I can do at the weekend. My wife is in despair, wondering whether she will see me later tonight or not until the end of next week.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): Not being married, may I point out to my hon. Friend that he has not yet told us whether his wife wants to see this new procedure come about?

Mr. Crouch: I shall consult my wife. I hope that there will be no report about what I have said about the servant in my house, because that might be misinterpreted. We use words here that are understood my hon. Members and are parliamentary language, but they might be misunderstood by my wife.

You have pleaded, Mr. Speaker, that we should be serious, and I agree. I have said that I will not quote Shakespeare again, though, heaven knows, he is serious enough. He is certainly as serious as the hon. Member for Bolsover, who has prompted me to support him.

The hon. Member for Bolsover is smiling today and is a different man from what he was in the past. He used to use derisory phrases about me. He once called me Wilfrid Hyde-White. I cannot think why. As the House saw yesterday, I am not a very good actor.

This is a serious matter and I know that some hon. Members, including my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, want to get on to the next business.

Mr. Nellist: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Crouch: I have given way and I want to draw my remarks to a close, but I will give way to the hon. Gentleman if he will be brief.

Mr. Nellist: The hon. Gentleman's response to my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) should have been longer. She asked him about the conditions of those who work in this place. Like me, the hon. Gentleman will know that, as this place is a palace, it is not covered by the regulations that apply to shops, factories and so on. Fire regulations and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 do not apply here.

The hon. Gentleman will also know that most accidents take place towards the end of shifts or in periods of overtime. We may have witnessed such an accident this week when chemicals were put into the water supply at the Norman Shaw South building. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if the staff of the House are asked to work much longer than their normal working hours, not only will our working conditions be affected, but their health and safety will be put at risk?

Mr. Crouch: I shall not go far up that road, but I am concerned about health and safety and I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

I will draw my remarks to a close. On an unusually well-attended Friday sitting, the hon. Member for Bolsover has given us the opportunity to consider the most important question of all, which is the representation of the people. That is what we are here for.

Much as I admired the perspicacity and tenacity of the hon. Member for Bolsover——

Mr. Adley: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Crouch: No. I have admired the fact that the hon. Member for Bolsover has made such use of "Erskine May" in the past five days that few of us have been able to get access to it, but I agree with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that we would not swap the Government Chief Whip for him. I trust the judgment of the Chief Whip. We have seen on the front pages this week an example of the magnificent judgment of my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip.

On that happy note, and without any more references to anyone, I must say that I am unhappy to move on to the Business of the House, but I hope that I have made my point.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 201, Noes 109.

Division No. 232] **[12.40 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Craigen, J. M.
Alton, David	Cranborne, Viscount
Ancram, Michael	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Ashby, David	Dewar, Donald
Ashdown, Paddy	Dickens, Geoffrey
Aspinwall, Jack	Dicks, Terry
Beggs, Roy	Dorrell, Stephen
Beith, A. J.	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Bendall, Vivian	Dover, Den
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic	Dunn, Robert
Benyon, William	Durant, Tony
Bevan, David Gilroy	Fallon, Michael
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Favell, Anthony
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Body, Richard	Forrester, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Fox, Marcus
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*	Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Gale, Roger
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Galley, Roy
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Bright, Graham	Glyn, Dr Alan
Brinton, Tim	Greenway, Harry
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Bryan, Sir Paul	Grist, Ian
Burt, Alistair	Ground, Patrick
Butcher, John	Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Butler, Hon Adam	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Butterfill, John	Hancock, Mr. Michael
Campbell, Ian	Hanley, Jeremy
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Hannam, John
Cash, William	Hargreaves, Kenneth
Chope, Christopher	Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Hawksley, Warren
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*	Hayes, J.
Clarke, Thomas	Hayhoe, Barney
Clegg, Sir Walter	Henderson, Barry
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*	Hind, Kenneth
Colvin, Michael	Hirst, Michael
Conway, Derek	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Coombs, Simon	Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Cope, John	Holt, Richard
Cormack, Patrick	Home Robertson, John
Corrie, John	Hubbard-Miles, Peter

Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
McCusker, Harold
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Maginnis, Ken
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Martin, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pike, Peter
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robertson, George
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Tinn, James
Tracey, Richard
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
White, James
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Bruinvels and
Mr. Christopher Murphy.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adley, Robert
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Jackson, Robert
Janner, Hon Greville
Knowles, Michael
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Needham, Richard
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Ottaway, Richard
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spencer, Derek
Stern, Michael
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thurnham, Peter
Torney, Tom
Wareing, Robert
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Mikardo and
Mr. Douglas Hogg.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:

The House divided: Ayes 225, Noes 86.

Division No. 233] **[12.52 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyes, Roland
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clegg, Sir Walter
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Craigen, J. M.
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*

Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Barry
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hume, John
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leadbitter, Ted
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Robert
McCusker, Harold
MacGregor, John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Maginnis, Ken
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Martin, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, J.
Onslow, Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pike, Peter
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Shersby, Michael
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tinn, James
Tracey, Richard
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
White, James
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Archie Hamilton.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Clay, Robert
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Dalyell, Tam
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Madden, Max
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Prescott, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Torney, Tom
Wareing, Robert
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian Mikardo and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House do pass to the Orders of the Day.

Petitions

TOWER HAMLETS (HOUSING)

1.5 pm

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): I beg to ask leave to present a petition from many of my constituents, which states:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of UK Residents Sheweth:—

that the substantial reduction, resulting from the policy of Her Majesty's Government, in the funds available to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for the maintenance and repair of the public housing stock in the Borough is causing a large and growing number of the families in that stock to live in conditions intolerable in a civilised society;

that there is an unduly high incidence of leaking roofs, walls growing condensation-induced fungus, defective plumbing, broken windows, peeling wallpaper, lifts out of action and other unnecessary burdens on residents which could be lifted if adequate resources were available;

that overcrowding and homelessness are equally rife;

that not only people's homes but also their environments are deteriorating fast; and that all these defects and dangers continue to grow.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will demand that Her Majesty's Government begin to pay more attention to people's needs than to monetarist mathematical formulae, and provide the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, and other similar authorities, with adequate resources to maintain, repair, improve and extend their housing stock in order to make it possible for their citizens to live in safe, healthy and comfortable homes.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will every pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

TOWER HAMLETS (RATE SUPPORT GRANT)

Mr. Mikardo: I beg to ask leave to present a further petition from many of my constituents, which states:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of UK Residents Sheweth:—

that the changes in Rate Support Grant made by Her Majesty's Government have seriously damaged the capacity of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to care for those of its citizens who are disadvantaged by reason of age, infirmity, physical and mental illness and handicaps, unemployment, poverty, dependence and inadequate housing, particularly as the total number of those disadvantaged citizens in the Borough, as elsewhere, has grown substantially as a result of the policies pursued by Her Majesty's Government since 1979;

that this decline has aggravated, and continues to aggravate, the progressive rundown of an already deprived area, and places particular burdens on its women;

that this difficult, indeed sometimes desperate, situation is further worsened by the threat to the continued existence of the Greater London Council and therefore to the funding of a number of voluntary organisations on whom many people in the Borough increasingly depend;

that many of the members of ethnic minority groups who constitute a large part of the Borough's population are specially disadvantaged by the unfairness of nationality and immigration legislation and regulations and by the inadequacy of the legislation on racial discrimination;

and that young people are threatened with the rundown or closure of some training facilities in the Borough.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will demand that Her Majesty's Government will reverse its present policy designed to make the rich richer and the poor poorer, and ensure that adequate funds are available to the local authorities in deprived inner-city areas to halt their decline and move them up to higher standards.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

LONDON DOCKLANDS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Mr. Mikardo: I have a third and last petition which is as follows:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble petition of UK Residents Sheweth:

that some of the activities of the London Docklands Development Corporation severely disadvantage many of the people living in the area administered by the Corporation, in that land which is urgently needed as the sites of homes to let at rents which those people can afford is instead being used for luxury housing;

that certain developments on the banks of the River Thames initiated by the Corporation have the effect of denying public access to that river and therefore to the practice of water sports and recreations;

that such developments, and others, are carried out without consultation with the people living in the area and therefore without adequate consideration being given to the environmental consequences of those developments;

that the arrangements covering the Enterprise Zone have the effect of causing the price of land within the Zone to escalate, so that it is only the landowners who benefit substantially from those arrangements;

that those arrangements also create significant inequalities and injustices between the operators of premises just outside the boundaries of the Zone and those within those boundaries;

that the Corporation is not providing support for local community service organisations commensurate with that formerly provided by the local authorities at whose expense the Corporation has been funded;

and that the Docklands Light Railway of which the Corporation is a joint sponsor, is being planned with unmanned stations that do not provide adequate safety and comfort for those who use them, and especially for older people.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray——

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): How many of them?

Mr. Mikardo: I have not counted them.

The petition continues:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will demand that Her Majesty's Government will ensure that the London Docklands Development Corporation will not engage in any developments affecting the environment and other elements in the welfare of the people in its area without fully consulting in advance the community organisations representing those people; that it will return to the Council of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets as much of the land compulsorily sequestrated to it as that Council needs as sites of homes to be let at rents which fall within the means of many people in the area who desperately need such homes; that it will increase by a reasonable amount each year its grants to local community service organisations; that it will safeguard and increase the facilities for public access to the banks of the River Thames; and that it will ensure that the plans for the Docklands Light Railway will provide for safe and comfortable manned stations.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I call the next hon. Member to present a petition, perhaps it would be helpful if I were to remind the House of Standing Order No. 119, which states:

"Every Member offering to present a petition to the House, not being a petition for a private bill, or relating to a private bill before the House, shall confine himself to a statement of the parties from whom it comes, the number of signatures attached to it, and the material allegations contained in it, and to reading the prayer of such a petition."

That is what hon. Members should confine their remarks to.

BIRMINGHAM (RATES)

1.15 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I should like to present a petition which has been collected by the Birmingham Labour party and signed by nearly 10,000 people who live in the city of Birmingham. They include my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who regrets that he is unable to be here to present the petition himself.

The citizens of Birmingham are worried about the loss of £125 million by the city council. I should emphasise that the council has not mislaid the money — it has been robbed by the Government as a direct result of their changes to local government finance since 1979.

According to the city treasurer, these changes by the Government have taken a total of £125 million from the city council and have culminated in a loss of £47 million this year alone. That means that the city council has been forced by the Government to levy a rate which is 30p higher than it would otherwise have levied. That is on top of an increase of 23p as a result of the policies of the local Conservatives who used to control the city council.

This year, the city council has been forced to increase the rates by 43 per cent.——

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I seek your guidance? When the hon. Member started to present his petition, I distinctly heard him hint that he was presenting it on behalf of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who has signed it. Is it not correct that an hon. Member may not sign a petition which he is presenting? I seek your guidance as to whether the petition is being presented on behalf of the hon. Member for Perry Barr.

Mr. Davis: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is in order for the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) to present a petition on behalf of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker).

Mr. Davis: The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) raised a foolish point as, if he had listened more carefully, he would have heard me say that my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr is one of the signatories of the petition. I am not acting on his behalf. If my hon. Friend had been here he would have presented the petition, but he is not. I am presenting the petition on behalf of my hon. Friend as a citizen of Birmingham and 10,000 other citizens of Birmingham who have been robbed of £125 million by the Government.

The city council has been forced to increase its rates by 43 per cent. this year although it is spending £25 million less than the Secretary of State's civil servants admit is needed to preserve services in Birmingham.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not make a speech but describe what is in the petition.

Mr. Davis: I am describing the petition and what it is about. I shall not read all of it because that would take a long time. I am simply summarising the points of concern to the citizens of Birmingham. Civil servants admit that the council should spend another £25 million to provide the services that are needed. I do not want to describe those services now, even if you allowed me to do so, Mr. Speaker. Suffice it to say that services in the city of Birmingham must be improved. Even the Government admit that they should be improved, but they have taken money from the council.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must put to the House what the petition says, not his views on it.

Mr. Davis: That is what I am doing, Mr. Speaker, as you will see when you read the petition. It concludes:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House do pass legislation requiring the return of this sum which is urgently needed to provide basic services and jobs for the people of the city.

In other words, the message of the Birmingham Labour party, Birmingham city council and the people of Birmingham is, "Give us back our money."

To lie upon the Table.

UNBORN CHILDREN (PROTECTION) BILL

1.20 pm

Miss Joan Maynard (Sheffield, Brightside): I wish to present a petition signed by 189 people from all over the country, including Sheffield. It reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of UK Residents Sheweth :—

That the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill will, if enacted, severely damage the treatment of infertile women, prevent much-needed research, encroach upon patient confidentiality and give legal protection to the embryo.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray That your Honourable House Do

Vote against the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill at Third Reading, realising that it pre-empts a proper consideration of the Warnock Report by charging for application for a named woman to be treated for infertility by *in vitro* fertilisation; it discriminates against poor women and brings the State into an area of private life by severely restricting the use of fertilised embryos; it damages research into infertility, causes of handicap, contraception, gene defects and treatment of infertility by giving embryos legal protection; it accepts the view of a minority of the population and opens the way to an attack on abortion and the use of some forms of contraception.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

1.22 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, and that of the House, I present a petition on behalf of 1,000 men and women from all over Britain who believe that if the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill becomes law the prospects for families who suffer from muscular dystrophy and many similar conditions could be adversely affected. If the Bill becomes law research work on early human embryos will be prevented altogether, which will preclude the use of important anticipated developments involving the testing of early human embryos for the prevention of handicap and malformation.

The petitioners note that research on human embryos in Britain has been held back for the past two years due to the deliberations of the Warnock committee and in anticipation of controlling legislation. At present, scientists depend on early prenatal diagnosis at two to four months of pregnancy to prevent the birth of handicapped children. The petitioners believe that before long it should be possible to select for reimplantation embryos which have been shown to be free from the abnormality under investigation, thus doing away with the need for selective abortion. Those developments could well lead to the elimination of a number of grossly handicapping

[Mrs. Ann Clwyd]

conditions such as muscular dystrophy, but before being introduced into clinical practice such techniques will need to be researched and tested on early human embryos. That is what the current Bill will ban.

The petitioners are convinced that the Bill represents a major step backwards in the fight against genetic disease. They accept that there is a need for legislation in this area but believe that it should be properly balanced, taking into account the needs of parents and children at risk. The petitioners pray that the far-reaching effects that this Bill could have both on medical research and on families suffering from genetic disorders should be properly considered and that this Bill should be defeated.

To lie upon the Table.

1.25 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Before I present the petition, may I put a point of order to you, Mr. Speaker. It relates directly to the petition that I am about to present. Since going through the necessary procedure, by taking the petition to the Journal Office and obtaining the signature of the Clerk there and subsequently taking it to the Lower Table Office, I have received several additional petition forms. There has been an enormous surge of opinion against the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill. It is very difficult to keep pace with the signatures that are constantly being received. I am in the difficulty that several additional forms were received after I had obtained the consent of the Journal Office and subsequently that of the Lower Table Office. They are in identical form. Will it be in order for me to add them to the original petition? If you so direct me, Mr. Speaker, I can extract them. It will not affect the force of the argument.

Mr. Speaker: It will be quite in order for the hon. Gentleman to include them if they are in the same form. He said that they are in the same form.

Mr. Hamilton: I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker. I made that point in case some of my hon. Friends find that they are in a similar predicament.

The petition is signed by approximately 1,700 people from all over Great Britain. The House might be interested to know that the signatures range from Aberdeen to Brighton and that they were received in a relatively short period of time. I received 500 signatures alone from Brighton, including the constituency of the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden). They also came from Durham and Dorset, the Stirling royal infirmary, Lincoln college, Oxford, Somerville college, Oxford, St. Hilda's college, Oxford and Lady Margaret hall. A large number came from the Royal Free hospital in London, University college, London and the universities of Stirling and Edinburgh. That is a sufficient indication of both the quality and quantity of the signatories.

The petitioners assert that the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill will, if it becomes law, severely jeopardise the treatment now available to large numbers of infertile women who long to have their own children. They believe that the Bill will prevent much-needed research. They also say that the provisions of the Bill will encroach—the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) knows this very well because we dealt with the matter at length in Committee—upon the well-known and respected relationship of confidentiality between a patient and his or her doctor.

The petition also says that the Bill seeks to give legal protection to all embryos as if they were all human beings. The petition ends:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House will vote against the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill at Third reading—

we shall not reach that stage until 5 July, a point that is not mentioned in the petition, but that is what will happen—

realising that it pre-empts a proper consideration of the Warnock report; that by charging for application for a named women to be treated for infertility by in vitro fertilisation it discriminates against poor women and brings the State into an area of private life; that by severely restricting the use of fertilised embryos it damages research into infertility, causes of handicap, contraception, gene defects and treatment of infertility; that by giving the embryo legal protection it accepts the view of a minority of the population and opens the way to an attack on abortion and the use of some forms of contraception.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

1.31 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I should like to make it clear that, although this is the fourth occasion on which I have presented a petition to the House in connection with the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, I have in the past always presented petitions, whether or not I agreed with their substance, because I have thought it right, when approached by constituents and others, that I should do so. On this occasion I am happy to present a petition that is critical of the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill. It is the second such critical petition that I have presented.

The petitioners are concerned about the effects of the Bill, and particularly that the debate on the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill might, if the Bill were passed, pre-empt proper consideration of the Warnock report.

The petition says:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.,

The Humble Petition of UK Residents Sheweth:—

that the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill will, if enacted, severely damage the treatment of infertile women, prevent much-needed research, encroach upon patient confidentiality and give legal protection to the embryo.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do vote against the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill at Third Reading, realising that it pre-empts a proper consideration of the Warnock Report; by charging for application for a named woman to be treated for infertility by in vitro fertilisation it discriminates against poor women and brings the state into an area of private life; by severely restricting the use of fertilised embryos it damages research into infertility, causes of handicap, contraception, gene defects and treatment of infertility; by giving the embryo legal protection it accepts the view of a minority of the population and opens the way to an attack on abortion and the use of some forms of contraception.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

1.33 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I have pleasure in presenting to the House three petitions which I think are of considerable importance. The first one, which I shall read to the House, says:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of UK Residents Sheweth:—

that the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill will, if enacted, severely damage the treatment of infertile women, prevent much-needed research, encroach upon patient confidentiality and give legal protection to the embryo.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House do vote against the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill at Third Reading—

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Get on and do it.

Mr. Cohen: The right hon. Gentleman says, "Get on and do it." There is always a future date when it can come before the House on Third Reading without an abuse of procedure, which is potentially the case today. There are still opportunities. These petitions give an opportunity to consider the issues more closely. The petition continues: do vote against the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill at Third Reading, realising that it pre-empts a proper consideration of the Warnock Report; by charging for application for a named woman to be treated for infertility by in vitro fertilisation it discriminates against poor women and brings the State into an area of private life; by severely restricting the use of fertilised embryos it damages research into infertility, causes of handicap, contraception, gene defects and treatment of infertility; by giving embryos legal protection it accepts the view of a minority of the population and opens the way to an attack on abortion and the use of some forms of contraception.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

That is signed by almost 200 citizens. When my secretary saw the petition, she felt moved to add her signature. I know that we are not supposed to make speeches, but I support the petitioners.

FOOD POLICY AND HEALTH

1.37 pm

Mr. Cohen: The second petition is from Leytonstone Labour party. It is addressed to the Commons of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, and states that there is an urgent need for a food policy to be adopted which will ensure healthier living. It reads:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray to your Honourable House to develop a food policy which integrates the priorities of health, agriculture and environment policy so as to provide a coherent approach for achieving good health and secure food in a suitable environment and that all necessary legislation and administrative arrangements be introduced as a priority for this purpose, particularly with the central aim of achieving a healthier, better-fed nation and a food industry based on sane economic and environmental policies. Furthermore that this be the single unified principle for all Government departments to apply in a co-ordinated manner as opposed to the present short-term, contradictory and often incoherent policies in this matter. That to this end, Her Majesty's Government to use its powers and influence, including those of improving food purchasing policy by itself and all other public authorities as part of a concerted approach by the State. That other elements of a healthier food policy to include: Creating social and economical conditions in which people can afford a good and healthy diet and are able to make sensible decisions about the food they eat and buy;

Helping people improve their own health by ensuring that healthy foods are readily available;

Setting out dietary goals as the basis for food policy;

Support for continuing research into relations between diet and disease, and the development of preventative strategies;

Requiring food labelling to be more informative about methods of production and to relate to dietary goals;

Making sure through health education, that people know enough to use the information on labels in choosing what to eat;

Promoting the development of standard, recognisable codes of symbols as part of the system of informative labelling;

Support the development of consumer surveys to discover attitudes to diet and health, to improve consumer understanding and enhance the trend towards a healthier diet;

Drawing up a new code of practice on food and drink advertising aimed at increasing the factual and informative role and limiting unsubstantiated claims;

Strengthening food regulations to ensure that food manufacturers improve the nutritional value of their product and willing the means of enforcement of such regulations and standards with an effective and sufficiently staffed inspectorate;

Expanding resources available to the Health Education Council to mount effective nutrition campaigns, including campaigns to assist special needs groups in society such as pregnant women, babies and children, the elderly and the chronically sick;

Co-ordinating existing health authority initiatives and laying down guidelines for extending their educational role in the community;

Involving family doctors, dentists, health visitors, district nurses and others in the primary and community health services in promoting a healthier diet;

Encouraging schools to give sound dietary advice in both examination and non-examination courses, this to entail examining boards for public examinations adopting the new dietary goals;

Revising the nutritional goals issued to public bodies involved in catering, such as schools, hospitals, prisons, government and local authority canteens and the armed forces, whether the body is directly involved or contracts out the catering;

Restoring——

this is the most important one—

the school meals service, which *The Lancet* has described as the sheet anchor of child nutrition, with new and improved dietary goals;

Refusing to allow——

this is another important one—

the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Economic Community to, in any way, block or impair the new dietary goals for the nation;

Support and encouragement of research and development into animal breeding and rearing so that far leaner meat and good quality low fat milk is produced to conform better with the new dietary goals;

Working out with those involved in food production and other sectors of the food industry how to safeguard jobs in farming, food processing and retailing, in particular, the trades unions to be involved in planning the changes and opportunities that will arise;

Undertaking a thorough and coherent review aimed at presenting a unified political response right across the spectrum of government.

In addition to these measures, which would have a major relevance to tackling dietary ignorance and over-indulgence, it is recognised that rebuilding the economy, including its restructuring with a redistribution of wealth, is necessary to provide better living standards. This is the single most important contribution to an effective food policy, particularly as poverty is a major cause of poor diets. Therefore, healthier food at prices people can afford is essential, and by improving economic conditions, by changing agricultural policies and by curbing the power of the food and agri-business, people will in effect be provided with a wider choice of healthier foods and also the information that they need to make sensible decisions about their diet.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

I think that you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that that is an important petition. I am pleased to present it to the House. It is signed by 29 members of the Leytonstone Labour party. However, they are representative of a vast number of people throughout the country. I was minded to support the petition.

M11 LINK ROAD

1.44 pm

Mr. Cohen: I wish to present a third petition to the House. It reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

[Mr. Cohen]

Again, this is a petition from the Leytonstone ward Labour party. It is relevant because it is a direct constituency petition. I cannot express more adequately than the petition the urgency of dealing with the matters contained within it. It states:

That improvements are needed to the Housing and Environmental conditions on the route of the M11 Link road.

The link road is due to go through my constituency. It continues:

"Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House recognises that (1) Waltham Forest Council has paid £683,000 to the Department of Transport for rents and dilapidation payments over the past twenty years.

(2) The area is dilapidated and rat-infested.

(3) Many houses lack basic amenities and are in a bad state of repair.

(4) People have lived with uncertainty about the future for thirty-five years.

and that your honourable House takes action to

(1) reduce to peppercorn level rents on land and property payable to the Department of Transport to enable Housing Associations and co-ops to keep them in short-life use until demolition.

(2) Adequately fence and secure from intruders vacant land and properties and maintain boundary walls of properties in the Department of Transport's ownership.

(3) Allow Waltham Forest Council to spend more capital by increasing their H.I.P. allocation so that they can replace the homes they will be forced to vacate for demolition.

(4) Give grants to local organisations managing short-life properties in the area.

(5) Provide additional money for environmental improvements in the area.

(6) Make a decision to build a cut and covered road without further delay.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

The petition is signed by 27 members of Leytonstone's Labour party who represent the vast majority of my constituents. I wholeheartedly support the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

UNBORN CHILDREN (PROTECTION) BILL

1.46 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I wish to present a petition signed by Estella Clarke who is the secretary of the Ladywood Labour party and 208 other people, men and women, from all parts of the country. It calls on hon. Members to vote against the enormously misleadingly titled Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, which would prevent many infertile couples — an estimated one in 10 of all couples — from having children. Indeed, the Bill should be called the Prevention of any Chance of Many Children Being Born and Many Families having Children Bill.

I strongly associate myself with the sentiments of the petition because, as well as preventing infertile couples from having children, it will—this may be even more important—prevent research from taking place to enable couples who know that they have a congenital handicap from being able to bear a healthy child. Any hon. Member who wishes to vote for the Bill will have to take full responsibility for that.

The supporters of the petition believe that research in this area should be tightly controlled, but we feel that a properly considered Bill should be brought forward by the Government and that the present Bill should not proceed any further.

To save the time of the House, I have not read out the petition and have simply summarised the sentiments of those who have signed it.

To lie upon the Table.

AMBULANCE SERVICES (GWYNEDD)

1.48 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I have been asked by constituents to present a petition to the House. It is addressed to

"the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled

and is a petition from residents of the Dwyfor area, in my constituency. The petition concerns the plans of the Gwynedd area health authority for reorganising the ambulance service within the district. The plans are already in operation and are denying a psychiatric day centre the services of an ambulance, with the result that people who use the centre are unable to attend with the frequency with which they would otherwise attend. The coverage of the ambulance service in a widely scattered area has been reduced, leaving people vulnerable to illness, particularly as they have a long distance to travel to the district general hospital.

The petition has been signed by 70 residents, but it is a parallel petition to one signed by thousands of people which has been sent to the Secretary of State for Wales. This petition includes signatories from the centres of Pwllheli, Porthmadog, Criccieth, Tremadog, Abererch, Penrhos, Abersoch, Llanbedrog and Pentrefelin in my constituency. My constituents pray:

that your honourable House shall take the necessary steps to ensure that the Health Authority do not make any further cuts in the service and that they re-instate a full service in those places where cuts have already been made.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

MATTHEW BROWN BREWERY

1.51 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to present a petition relating to the proposed takeover of Matthew Brown brewery by the Scottish and Newcastle brewery.

Because of the importance of petitions to constituents, I have always endeavoured to present them on a Friday morning. This is the first occasion since I was given this and another petition that I have been in the House on a Friday morning, as on other Fridays I have been in my constituency.

It is within the knowledge of the House that the Scottish and Newcastle brewery sought to make a takeover bid for Matthew Brown, which is based in my constituency, and which also owns the Theakston brewery based at Masham, with other breweries in Carlisle and elsewhere in Cumbria.

The bid was resisted by the board of Matthew Brown, by its employees and by all those who had ever had the opportunity to compare the products of Matthew Brown with those of Scottish and Newcastle. The bid was also resisted by hon. Members on both sides of the House, but especially by my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), among others. I am glad to say that following that pressure, the bid was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission—

Mr. Speaker: That sounds like an argument. I should like the hon. Gentleman to read the petition.

Mr. Straw: Of course, Mr. Speaker, I accept what you say. However, I took the opportunity to read "Erskine May", and I hoped that I was presenting what amounted to the brief statement that Members may make in support of a petition.

The petition is supported by 2,500 signatures. It reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom . . . The Humble Petition of we, the citizens of Lancashire, showeth That the proposed takeover of Matthew Brown plc by Scottish and Newcastle plc would be against the public interest, and harm employment and consumer choice, and lead to monopoly. Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House should not permit this takeover.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will every pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

TRANSPORT BILL

1.53 pm

Mr. Straw: I wish to present a second petition, from the Blackburn borough council. It bears the common seal of the council under the signature of the chief executive and mayor, Councillor Clifford West.

The petition relates to the Transport Bill and is supported by a bookfull of signatures of residents of Blackburn, Darwen and elsewhere in east Lancashire. It claims that the proposed legislation set out in the Government's White Paper on buses is a threat to bus services in Blackburn. It petitions the Secretary of State for Transport to withdraw the proposals.

The petition itself shows that the Blackburn borough council has examined the White Paper on buses and the Transport Bill and feels that, if implemented, it will mean that:

(a) concessionary fares for elderly, disabled and other people in special need, including schoolchildren, could disappear

(b) that the strict safety standards needed for public service vehicles will not be upheld

(c) that continuity, reliability and stability of services will end

(d) many bus services will vanish, especially socially desirable services for small schoolchildren together with those operated early morning, evening, Sunday and on Bank Holidays

(e) the few services that are left will no longer link and services will become less frequent

(f) passengers will not know which services should run at what times or what fares are to be charged

(g) operators will compete with old, unsuitable buses and coaches

(h) neither users nor ratepayers will have any say about their local transport services.

But there are wider aspects to the proposals—the ratepayers' considerable investments in the countrywide fare marketing and co-ordination schemes are in jeopardy. New buses will not be bought, which means more unemployment in the bus-building industry, socially needed transport services will be put under pressure, highway costs, road accidents and congestion will increase, and the business of the community as a whole will suffer. Public transport is needed as a social service and the proposals of the White Paper would destroy that.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House reject any legislation to implement the proposals of the White Paper on buses and the Transport Bill.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

The bottom of the petition states that the common seal of the Blackburn borough council was affixed in the presence of the mayor and the chief executive.

To lie upon the Table.

UNBORN CHILDREN (PROTECTION) BILL

1.56 pm

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): It gives me great pleasure to present a petition from 94 patients of the Bourn Hall clinic near Cambridge. Today we have heard many petitions from thousands of people against the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill—so-called. No people have a greater right to petition the House than those patients who are benefiting from in vitro fertilisation. The petition states:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of Patients at Bourn Hall Clinic sheweth that Enoch Powell's, Unborn Children (Protection) Bill will adversely affect the treatment of patients undergoing in vitro fertilisation. Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House vote against the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill at Third Reading.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

The petition was signed by 94 men and women from every part of the United Kingdom, from Scotland to the south-west of England—from London, Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Lancashire. The House should pause to think and take great note of their plea. It is a tragedy that this private clinic is not funded by the NHS. Unless the House takes note of the petition, it will not be——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must stop the hon. Member, because he has already given his prayer. That is where he should finish. If the hon. Member wanted to make remarks, he should have done so before the petition was read.

To lie upon the Table.

SOCIAL SECURITY

1.58 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): I have two petitions to present, both of which are brief. The first was organised and taken around by members of the Brighton Labour party. Significantly, it is signed by 10 members of the borough council. The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of United Kingdom residents sheweth that the proposals in the Green Paper on Social Security will, if enacted, severely disadvantage the people of Brighton. Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House.

Vote against legislation to give effect to the Green Paper realising that Brighton has wage levels 12 per cent. below the regional average, some 4,500 people lost money as a result of the Housing Benefit reductions in 1984, and that Brighton Borough Council charges rates which are 40 per cent. above the national average.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

UNBORN CHILDREN (PROTECTION) BILL

2 pm

Ms. Richardson: I beg to ask leave to present a second petition, signed by 200 residents and visitors to the town of Brighton. The signatures have been collected only over the past week, and one will see why the people are concerned in a moment. It reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of UK Residents sheweth that citizens of and visitors to Brighton deplore the declared intention of the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown to make unprecedented use of

[Ms. Richardson]

his first place in Private Member's Motions on June 7 to permit proceedings on the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill. Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do vote against the Motion of the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will every pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

AMBULANCE SERVICES (GWYNEDD)

2.1 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I beg to ask leave to present a petition. As hon. Members will know, I represent a rural constituency spread over north and mid-Wales and the petition concerns the grave threat to the ambulance services in the constituency, evidenced by the recent plans of the district health authority. The petition says:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of residents of the Meirionnyd Nant Conwy area sheweth that they are gravely concerned about the Gwynedd Area Health Authority's plans for reorganising the ambulance service within the Constituency.

The concern of my constituents arises from the position of the high proportion of the elderly within the population and the fact that, within the health district itself, there are no district general hospital facilities. All the acute services are provided outside the district at the centres of Bangor, Llandudno, Wrexham, and Aberystwyth. The transport of acute patients to these centres is determined by an effective ambulance service, and the ambulance service also ensures that there is adequate provision for emergencies during the tourist season, when the district receives many outside visitors.

In addition, the maternity services and other acute services provided for people of working age within the constituency are located mainly outside the health district. The concentration of resources within the major district general hospitals should be supported by provisions within the communities for an ambulance service. The Welsh Office, through its formula of resource allocation to health districts, has not calculated properly for the ambulance service in the district and the petitioners feel strongly that the allocation made by the Welsh Office should include sufficient money for the provision of an ambulance service within the district. The alleged overspending of £400,000 by the health district on the ambulance service should form part of the allocation of the Welsh Office to the health district.

The petition ends:

Wherefore the Petitioners pray that your Honourable House should take the necessary steps to ensure that the Health Authority do not make any cuts in the service and that they continue to maintain a full service throughout the constituency as heretofore.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

UNBORN CHILDREN (PROTECTION) BILL

2.3 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of the patients of Bourn Hall clinic. It reads:

The humble Petition of Patients at Bourn Hall clinic sheweth that Enoch Powell's Unborn Children (Protection) Bill will make it difficult to treat patients undergoing in vitro fertilisation. Wherefore your petitioners pray.

That petition contains 22 signatures from all over the United Kingdom.

I have a similar petition, which reads:

Enoch Powell's Unborn Children (Protection) Bill will slow down improvements in the treatment of patients undergoing in vitro fertilisation.

That petition contains 29 signatures, from all over the United Kingdom.

I entirely agree with the view expressed by the petitioners in this matter. I have had the privilege and blessing of three children, and I could not possibly be party to seeing any legislation passing through the House that deprived other people, who unfortunately are not so blessed, of that privilege.

To lie upon the Table.

2.5 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): You will be aware, Mr. Speaker, that this is the first time that I have sought to present a petition to the House, though, like my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), in the past I have received petitions and, even though I disagreed with them, I have put them in the bag behind your Chair. That, I understand, is where the expression "in the bag" comes from when describing a completed project.

The petition that I present today bears the signatures of nearly 300 people from all parts of the country—from Alloa and Stirling in Scotland, from London and Surrey in the south and, in the midlands, from Birmingham, Warwick, Leamington and Coventry, including my own constituency.

The signatories petition against the Bill presented by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). They talk of the one in seven couples who would be affected by the Bill were it to be passed by the House and its restrictions on the treatment to reduce infertility or to discover the causes of severe handicaps and genetic defects.

The petition notes that these attacks will affect poor working-class women especially, because the rich can always go abroad to the various private clinics of Europe for the solution of their problems. The petitioners see the Bill as opening the way to an attack upon abortion, weakening the 1967 Act. As a Coventry Member of Parliament, in what is already one of the most difficult areas of the country in which to obtain an abortion, I give my full support to the petition.

The petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of United Kingdom Residents sheweth:—

that the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill will, if enacted, severely damage the treatment of infertile women, prevent much-needed research encroach upon patient confidentiality and give legal protection to the embryo.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House vote against the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill at Third Reading, realising that it pre-empts a proper consideration of the Warnock Report. By charging for application for a named woman to be treated for infertility by *in vitro* fertilisation it discriminates against poor women and brings the State into an area of private life; by severely restricting the use of fertilised embryos it damages research into infertility, cause of handicap, contraception, gene defects and treatment of infertility, by giving the embryo legal protection it accepts the view of a minority of the population and opens the way to an attack upon abortion and the use of some forms of contraception.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

2.8 pm

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I beg to present two petitions on behalf of patients at Bourn Hall clinic, near Cambridge.

I shall be brief as I am anxious for the House to get on to the business of the day—a debate in which I wish to speak.

The petitions contain 59 signatures and are concerned that

Enoch Powell's Unborn Children (Protection) Bill will have adverse effects on the treatment of patients undergoing fertility treatment.

The other petition refers to the fact that the Bill will seriously slow down the treatment of patients undergoing in vitro fertilisation.

I support the petitioners' prayer to the House.

To lie upon the Table.

2.9 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I beg leave to present two petitions on behalf of patients in Bourn Hall clinic in Cambridgeshire. Both petitions demonstrate that the patients feel that the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill would hinder work being done at Bourn Hall and that patients there are concerned about the Bill.

The first petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of patients at Bourn Hall clinic sheweth:—

that the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill will have adverse consequences for patients undergoing in vitro fertilisation.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House vote against the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill at Third Reading.

And your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

The petition is signed by Richard Oram and is supported by 38 other patients at Bourn hall.

The second petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of patients who have received treatment for infertility at Bourn Hall, Cambridge, Sheweth:—

that the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill will make treatment almost impossible because of the time limitation.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House vote against the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill at Third Reading.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

The petition is signed by Diana Barbour and 23 other patients at Bourn hall.

I should like to comment——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has now read out his prayer, so he cannot comment. He should have done that before.

Dr. Clark: I was going to comment on the people who signed the petition. Is that in order?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, all right.

Dr. Clark: The people who have signed the petition include two housewives who say that they are pregnant through the in vitro fertilisation technique.

To lie upon the Table.

UNWANTED PREGNANCIES

2.12 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I beg leave to present a petition:

To the Honourable Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of U.K. Residents Sheweth:—

That to prevent unwanted pregnancies amongst young women under sixteen years of age, the DHSS Circular of December 1980 should be fully implemented.

This prayer comes not from any particular organisation but, as with other petitions that we have heard today, from ordinary men and women in all parts of these islands—literally from the north of Scotland to the south coast, and from Wales to East Anglia. All the petitioners—there are several thousand of them—are deeply concerned about the case brought in the High Court by Mrs. Victoria Gillick and the decision in the Court of Appeal on it. The petitioners are concerned at the many young women who will be in danger of unwanted pregnancies. They are concerned at the interference with what they see as the necessary right of doctors to give the treatment that they feel is necessary for the health of their patients. They are anxious that if the House of Lords upholds the decision of the Court of Appeal, the Government might take steps speedily to change the law allowing doctors to give the advice and treatment that they think is necessary, as set out in the Department of Health and Social Security circular.

The problem that the petitioners identify goes back to earlier attitudes in our law, when it was considered, in effect, that children were the property of their parents—an attitude which has, happily, changed in recent years. My petitioners are anxious about the dangers of bringing into the law the attitude of Mrs. Gillick, who seems to assume that becoming a parent automatically makes someone kind and wise, despite all the evidence that some parents physically and sexually maltreat their children. The petitioners therefore pray:

If the House of Lords upon Appeal in the case of Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech AHA and Another do Uphold the decision of the Court of Appeal this would leave many young women in danger of unwanted pregnancies and prevent doctors from giving treatment they felt necessary for the health of their patients and

The law should be changed to allow doctors to give abortion and contraceptive advice and treatment as set out in the DHSS circular on the organisation and development of a family planning service.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Houses of Parliament (Terrace)

2.14 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On Wednesday this week, I approached the most senior members of the Serjeant at Arms' Department to draw to their attention the scaffolding, staging and access ladders on the Terrace bordering the river Thames. I received a courteous hearing from officers in that Department, and got the prompt reply that they had drawn my complaints to the attention of the Property Services Agency, which would redress the problems. One item has been corrected.

During the presentation of petitions today, I took the opportunity to have a further look at the Terrace. Even more hazardous equipment is lying there, which puts hon. Members, staff and visitors to the House in serious jeopardy. It is the second time this week that people have been placed in that position. It would be remiss of me to allow today's sitting to close without bringing the matter to your attention, Mr. Speaker, with the exhortation that you add your support to the representations made on our behalf to the Serjeant at Arms' Department.

Mr. Speaker: I shall look into the matter.

Unborn Children (Protection) Bill

2.15 pm

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): I beg to move,

That at this day's sitting the remaining stages of the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill may be proceeded with until any hour though opposed and on Friday 5th July Lords Amendments to the said Bill may be proceeded with until any hour though opposed.

When I was fortunate enough to draw first place in the ballot for private Members' motions, I decided to table the procedure motion that is now before the House. I did so for several reasons. On 15 February this year, the Bill received a Second Reading by a majority of 238 to 66. It was supported by Members from the Labour party, the Liberal party, the Scottish National party and the Conservative party. Indeed, it was an all-party Bill. There was a long Committee stage, but the Report stage was not completed.

Although there are differences of opinion about the Bill, no one can deny the vital issues at stake. In view of those vital issues and the decisions that must be made, I believed it important that the House should have the opportunity to decide whether it should discuss the Bill again. I deeply regret the fact that that will not be possible today.

I have been accused of abusing the procedures of the House, but I reject that accusation. I used the procedures of the House, as other hon. Members have legitimately done today. To accuse anyone of abuse is to attack his integrity.

The amendment signed by some extremely distinguished hon. Members, including the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), and my right hon. Friends the Members for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) and for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), is a seductive and clever amendment, but I would ask the House to consider the following point. What has arisen today is extremely rare and will probably not occur again for 50 years. Several factors had to come together. First, we had to have strong all-party support for a private Member's Bill. Indeed, we had support across the board, with the exception of the Welsh nationalists. Secondly, the Government had to be neutral. Thirdly, the Bill had passed through most of its stages in the House of Commons. Fourthly, and most remarkably, a supporter of the Bill had to win first place in the ballot for private Members' motions on a most critical day. The chance of all those things happening again will probably not occur in the rest of this century, and I suspect in most of next century.

Whatever happens to my motion, which is a use of procedure, not an abuse of it, it will almost certainly be submitted to the Select Committee on Procedure. That Committee will make a recommendation to the House, and the House will decide how the procedure should be used in the future. Had my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House made a speech this afternoon, I am sure that he would have been as seductive and persuasive as is the amendment.

Why are the Government and so many senior ex-Ministers so wary? My Back-Bench colleagues on both sides of the House should for once forget the issues of the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill and remember the powers and position of Back-Bench Members. If we are not careful, we shall hand over, bound hand and foot, all powers to decide about the future of private Member's

Bills. It will mean that no private Member's Bill will have a chance of reaching the statute book unless it is uncontentious or given Government time. I beg the House to think carefully about changing the present procedures.

I have cut my speech extremely short. There are few greater privileges than the opportunity to serve in this House. I should like the House to be free to exert its will. I do not want it to tie its hands or to allow the Front Benches and the usual channels to have the power always to prevail.

Mr. Speaker: At the beginning of this morning's sitting I announced to the House that I had selected the amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot).

2.21 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I beg to move, to leave out from 'That' to the end of the Question and to insert instead thereof:

'this House is of opinion that to exempt the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill for an unlimited period from the provisions of Standing Order No. 1 (Sittings of the House) would breach the longstanding practice of the House to sit on Saturdays or Sundays only in circumstances of national crisis, and the unanimous decision of the House in 1979 (following a report by a Select Committee on Procedure) to bring forward its hours of sitting on Fridays from 11 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. to 9.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. in recognition of the fact that many Members have to travel long distances to their constituencies.'.

The hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) said that the Bill had all-party support. He will notice that my amendment also has all-party support, and for two reasons. Today has been a good day for the House. Everyone knows that there are extremely strong passions about this issue, the Bill itself and its passage through the House. Despite that, the House has discussed the matter sensibly in the circumstances of the day.

It would be extremely churlish not to acknowledge that a reason why the House has kept its temper sensibly today under your guidance, Mr. Speaker, was the remarkable speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who opened today's proceedings. As everyone who heard it will agree, it was a credit to the House. I am not suggesting tht he will be seduced by the Establishment — nothing of the sort will ever happen to him. The House should congratulate him on the way in which he opened our proceedings earlier today.

The hon. Member for Kemptown put his case in moderate terms, but he is greatly mistaken. I do not blame him for introducing his motion. Every hon. Member has the right to use our procedures to his own ends and purposes. I used to take the view that everything in love, war and parliamentary procedure was in order. That applies to hon. Members on both sides of the House. The hon. Gentleman was right to put down the motion, as were all the hon. Members who tabled amendments to it.

A reason why the amendments were tabled was that if the hon. Gentleman's motion were carried the consequences would be entirely different from those which he forecast. Far from being beneficial to Back-Bench Members, it would be utterly ruinous to private Members' time in the months and years to come. It would mean that every Bill would be open to similar attempts to impose a timetable, that the balance between public business and private business would be altered, that almost every week we would be open to having the same sort of discussions as we are having now, and that soon the Government would have to table a motion of the character of my amendment. Indeed, I am surprised that they did not table such a motion on these proceedings. If they had, they would soon have found that control over parliamentary time would have been destroyed. That would not have been beneficial to private Members' time any more than it would have been to public business.

I strongly agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) when he said that Members of Parliament must be prepared to withstand pressures. None of us should complain about pressures from outside the House. Indeed, part of our purpose is to be subjected to pressures. However, there are some distinctions about the pressures that are brought to bear, and I should like to give the example of one which is strictly apposite to the Bill.

Many hon. Members will have read the remarkable article written by Cardinal Basil Hume in *The Times* yesterday. He wrote:

"The Unborn Children (Protection) Bill is central to a debate about present-day society: how it shall take control of its own future"

He concluded with large claims which elevated the discussion to high altitudes, writing:

"The abandonment of objective moral principles and the dogmatism of permissiveness have combined in our day to undermine society. This is our crisis."

That is what he says the Bill is about. If that is what the Bill is about, this was not the proper way in which to get it through the House of Commons.

There is a good case for arguing that private Members' Bills open up subjects which should be dealt with by Government legislation. That is a perfectly proper procedure and helps guard against some dangers. If more private Members' Bills were put through the House by means such as these, that would not do much for the reputation of legislation.

I should like to quote the other type of representation that has been made and to contrast it with what Cardinal Hume said. One of my hon. Friends received a letter which ran:

"I have thought about your letter to me of 26th April regarding your absention at the second reading of Mr. Powell's Bill, and it has given me great cause for concern. I had previously sent you the guidelines issued by the Bishops on the matter, and these are quite clear, so that I have been troubled by your indecision, and have wondered whether or not I owe it to my people to put them in the picture on your position.

It is my hope that you will by now see clearly the vital point of principle which is raised, and that you will make yourself available in the House next Friday and Friday night and if need be on Saturday to support the Bill."

That is not the best kind of pressure. There will be discussions. Much the best course is for the Department of Health and Social Security to introduce a Bill after full discussions with the medical authorities. The matter, having been opened up, is bound to be proceeded with in that way.

I hope that, when we return to discussion of these matters in different circumstances, the pressures on hon. Members will be more in the terms of Cardinal Hume's article than in those in letters sent to some of my hon. Friends. Cardinal Hume would do the public discussion of the issue a great service if he repudiated representations made in the other terms that I have described, especially when they are directed not solely at the Bill but at changes in procedure such as the hon. Member for Kemptown is perfectly entitled to seek.

[Mr. Michael Foot]

The suggested changes in procedure would do great injury to how we conduct private Members' business and to the general discussion of legislation. It would alter the balance and, Friday after Friday, whenever such motions were put down——

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Would they be passed?

Mr. Foot: If the motion that the right hon. Gentleman has supported — he may even have had a hand in devising it, who can tell?—were passed today, it might be too late——

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Private Members' Bills

UNBORN CHILDREN (PROTECTION) BILL

Order for further consideration (as amended in the Standing Committee) read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Speaker: To be further considered what day? No day named.

HORSES AND PONIES BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 July.

UNSOLICITED NEWSPAPERS (LIMITATION OF DELIVERY) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

LAW REFORM (PARENT AND CHILD) (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

MEDICAL ACT 1983 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 July.

SOLICITORS (INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (MINIMUM AGE) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 July.

Test Ban Treaty

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): It is convenient and appropriate that this Adjournment debate should follow that initiated yesterday by the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) dealing with the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty is crucial to the future of the non-proliferation treaty. I say that at the outset because the most remarkable and disturbing element in the reply to yesterday's debate from the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce), was the statement that the non-proliferation treaty and progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty should not be linked. In reality, progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty is crucial to the future of the non-proliferation treaty on which the third review conference will take place in Geneva in September.

It should not be necessary to point out that adherence to a comprehensive test ban treaty would stop non-nuclear countries testing and developing their own nuclear weapons. At present there are five members of the so-called nuclear club — the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France and China—but a considerable number of other countries are on the brink of joining. The United Nations non-proliferation treaty is a bargain between three countries that have nuclear weapons—the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom —and 121 countries which do not. Article 6 of the treaty requires the nuclear states to make progress towards the cessation of the nuclear arms race. For the Minister to suggest to the non-nuclear Governments participating in the review conference that the present disarmament talks between the United States and the Soviet Union in Geneva are an adequate response to article 6 is unrealistic, to put it mildly.

Progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty is crucial. The preamble to the non-proliferation treaty states:

"Recalling the determination expressed by the Parties to the 1963 Treaty banning nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water in its Preamble to seek to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time and to continue negotiations to this end."

Third world participants in the 1975 review conference called for specific undertakings from the nuclear weapons states. Among them was a call for

"A comprehensive ban on nuclear tests, including those underground."

Failure to make progress in that area was one of the reasons for the break-up of the 1980 review conference.

We must take note of the debates taking place in countries that may become nuclear weapons states. We have to acknowledge that in those countries, whether or not they are signatories to the non-proliferation treaty, reference is rightly made to the progress that ought to be made towards banning nuclear tests.

Next week we shall discuss the Government's defence Estimates. Among other matters, we shall debate the respective positions of NATO and the Warsaw pact. Ministers will argue that the deployment of nuclear weapons by east and west has been a major factor, if not the major factor, in the avoidance of war in central Europe, but Ministers will not carry that argument to the point of suggesting that it is in the interests of the world that all states should have nuclear weapons. I hope that the Government recognise the danger to both this and future generations of the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. I make no apology for dwelling at length upon the fact that these two issues will be linked in the minds of those Governments who have such an important nuclear role to play.

The House has debated on a number of occasions during the last two years the pollution that has been caused by the British atmospheric tests in the 1950s. We are aware of the controversy surrounding the pollution in the south Pacific. Underground tests are less of an environmental hazard than atmospheric tests, but underground tests produce radioactivity which seeps into the water table. Hon. Members know of examples of that kind.

In June 1963 President Kennedy unilaterally announced a halt to United States atmospheric testing and challenged the Soviet Union to do likewise. In 10 days the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States had negotiated a treaty prohibiting tests in the atmosphere, outer space and under water. This partial test ban treaty was the first significant arms control agreement. It committed the three depository signatories to

"seek to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time."

But, in fact, underground nuclear testing continued unabated.

In 1974 the threshold test ban treaty limiting underground nuclear weapons tests to yields of 150 kilotons was signed, followed in 1976 by the peaceful nuclear explosions treaty which extended this limit to nuclear tests for peaceful purposes. Although both sides have adhered to the conditions of these treaties, neither has been ratified by the United States Congress.

In 1977 Britain, America and the Soviet Union initiated a new round of talks for a comprehensive test ban treaty and by 1980 the main framework for a verifiable ban, including on-site inspection, installation of tamperproof seismic detection stations by each country in the territory of the others and international exchange of seismic data, had been agreed upon. But, after his election in 1980, President Reagan suspended the talks, and in 1982 he reversed what had for a long time been United States policy by announcing that the United States would not resume negotations for a CTBT, and that that could be only a long-term goal.

At the Geneva conference on disarmament in 1982-83, Britain and America prevented any progress being made towards a nuclear test ban by insisting that discussions were limited to problems of verification and compliance. Of course, verification is an important issue and, indeed, that was the argument that dominated the 1984 UN conference on disarmament. The Minister knows well the depressing report—in relation to the position of Britain and the United States — that emerged from that conference.

It is correct to say that real progress has been made towards verification. Many experts in various countries have expressed their views on that issue. The Minister does not need me to refer to important statements by senior figures. I shall simply confine myself to telling him that I had the privilege earlier this week, as chairman of the parliamentary Labour party defence committee, of

[Mr. Gavin Strang]

meeting Lord Carrington, the Secretary General of NATO. When I raised the issue of verifiction with him, he acknowledged that major progress had been made in that area. He certainly did not say that all the problems had been solved in terms of a comprehensive test ban treaty, but it was clear that the issue is whether we can now make progress and get down to a discussion of the banning of all but very small nuclear explosions — of perhaps 1 kiloton or somewhat higher than that. There is no point in being drawn at this stage about the size of explosions. It is no longer possible to sustain the case that there are sound scientific arguments for the lack of progress in this area. I hope that the British Government will desist from advancing that case, which is not a convincing one, in relation to their opposition—one might almost say—to a comprehensive test ban treaty.

There will be an important review conference in September on the non-proliferation treaty. There is a campaign in various countries of the world, including the United States, to try to bring pressure on the three nuclear weapon states which are signatories to the NTBT—the USSR, United States and Britain—to make real progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty, and towards a reduction of the threshold from 150 kilotons to a much lower figure for underground nuclear tests. The proposal was put forward by a group in the United States, supported by Greenpeace and others, that a ban on testing should be a voluntary undertaking, with a moratorium to be announced by the United States. The Soviet Union responded in April, as the Minister knows, by saying that it would be willing to agree to a moratorium on underground tests from August this year, the date of the anniversary of Hiroshima. So the British Government have a chance to make a real contribution.

There is, of course, a limit to what we can do in the area of multilateral nuclear disarmament. I have not time to develop the indictment—I have to use that word—which can be advanced against the Government's record in the area of progress towards nuclear disarmament and a pulling back from the almost relentless drive by the world towards a nuclear abyss.

The case for Britain taking an independent stance on that issue and being prepared to speak as Britain as opposed to merely echoing the position of the Reagan Administration is overwhelming. We must see this debate as one element in the campaign towards a ban on underground nuclear tests and to help ensure that the review conference on a non-proliferation treaty in September does not break up in failure and lead to an outcome that could be even worse than that of 1980.

I hope that we can obtain a positive response from the Minister this afternoon. This is an important issue. Most Members will acknowledge that the threat of nuclear war, whether it be in the short, medium or long-term, is the overriding issue facing our people and all Governments. I urge the Government to reconsider their stance on this issue and to try to give a lead, at least, on the issue of banning underground nuclear tests.

2.45 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Richard Luce): I congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on raising this important debate about the comprehensive test ban. I welcome the chance to set out the Government's position on that important objective. I appreciate the strength of the hon. Gentleman's feelings on the issue. I ask him, however, to acknowledge the fact that we in the Government feel equally strongly. We share that objective. We wish to make positive progress towards a comprehensive test ban. He is wrong to suggest, therefore, that the Government are opposed to such a treaty. We are interested in making progress towards a treaty and hope that we can reach agreement that will allow for a treaty that will hold and will not be eroded because of inadequate verification.

The Government, in accordance with their international obligations, remain firmly committed to the pursuit of a verifiable comprehensive test ban. We are actively working on the problems that remain in achieving one. Such a ban, in the context of the substantial reductions in the numbers of nuclear weapons which we and our allies are trying to achieve in other forums, such as Geneva, could be an important step. We should be proud of the fact that Britain played a leading and distinctive role in the early 1960s, in drawing up the partial test ban treaty.

Few countries have demonstrated fuller support for effective constraints in this field than ourselves, as our treaty commitments show. Together with the United States and the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom participated fully from 1977 to 1980 in trilateral negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty. The hon. Gentleman referred to that. These were adjourned following the failure to resolve a number of important compliance questions. Therein lies the enduring problem, on which I must spend a little time.

The United Kingdom has played a full and active part in relevant multilateral discussions at the Geneva conference on disarmament, where a nuclear test ban working group was established in 1982. In 1983, the Government tabled for consideration two important working papers on "Peaceful Nuclear Explosions in Relation to a Nuclear Test Ban" and "Verification Aspects of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty". As I said in my speech to the conference on disarmament on 12 March, it is paradoxical and disappointing that detailed work on those subjects was under way there during the 1982 and 1983 sessions but has since been interrupted by the refusal of some non-aligned and Warsaw pact delegations to agree a renewed mandate for an ad hoc committee on a nuclear test ban.

As a result, the technical issues raised in the two British working papers have not so far received the attention they deserve. Indeed, some countries have evaded these issues. In a spirit of compromise, the United Kingdom and the other western delegations proposed at the conference on disarmament last July a broader mandate for an ad hoc committee. This was designed to permit the

"detailed examination of specific issues relating to a comprehensive test ban, including the issue of scope as well as those of verification and compliance, with a view to negotiation of a treaty on the subject".

At the United Nations General Assembly last autumn, a large number of states voted in favour of the resumption of work at the conference on disarmament taking place on this very basis.

Unfortunately, a minority of other countries remain apparently reluctant to agree this. But we remain convinced of the value of further work in Geneva towards a comprehensive test ban. We continue to be closely

involved in the useful technical work performed by the ad hoc group of scientific experts appointed by the conference on disarmament, and we want to see this continue.

I shall deal now with verification. I know that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that it is a salient part of any treaty that we may draw up. I have already set out the efforts which have been made towards getting the problems of a comprehensive test ban thoroughly discussed in international forums, but what about the goal itself? On this, the Government are firmly convinced that no test ban treaty can be truly worth pursuing which does not contain adequate safeguards of compliance by all its signatory parties. The importance of resolving outstanding difficulties over how to verify such compliance lies at the very heart of discussions about a comprehensive test ban.

I should make it clear that we are not looking for perfect or 100 per cent. verification. But we must be absolutely clear about what verification we do require. When I addressed the United Nations first committee on disarmament last November, I made the point that the definition of adequate verification would always be a matter for careful political judgment, which must none the less rest upon technical factors. I then posed a number of questions which, in studying the verification provisions of any arms control agreement, we must be prepared to ask. First, will any undetected evasion of the agreement provide a significant military advantage? Secondly, will significant non-observance of the agreement be detected early enough to allow any necessary counter-measures to be taken? Thirdly, even if the evidence of such non-observance is available, will it be convincing enough to justify such counter-measures? Lastly, if we are confident that we can give the right answers to these questions, will we then be able to deter any temptation to depart from strict compliance with the agreement?

Let us consider a comprehensive test ban treaty in the light of these questions. It is clear that the clandestine continuation of nuclear testing at levels sufficient to confer a significant military advantage would have disastrous consequences for the treaty itself and for international security and stability. So it is an essential element of a comprehensive test ban that such clandestine testing is effectively precluded. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree with that. I stress that an unverifiable comprehensive test ban would be no ban — a bogus disarmament measure of benefit to no one except those who might seek to violate it. That is the problem that has bedevilled our efforts to make progress since the 1960s.

Those very issues were directly addressed in the United Kingdom working paper on verification that I mentioned earlier. It identified seismic monitoring as by far the most promising, indeed virtually the only, technology for the long-range collection of those data on underground explosions which would be needed for any realistic verification arrangement. It drew attention to the fact that the current techniques of seismic monitoring require improvement before adequate verification of a treaty could be envisaged. We believe that any realistic progress towards a comprehensive test ban requires fuller examination of this aspect at the conference on disarmament. We hope in future, and provided work can be resumed, to make further substantial contributions on this subject.

It is not enough to assert that seismological means are already adequate to verify a comprehensive ban. There is no scientific evidence for that assertion, which ignores two of the most intractable problems on which our scientists, together with their colleagues abroad, are continuing to work. Those problems are, first, the detection of signals from seismic disturbances against background noise in the surrounding environment and, secondly, discrimination or identification of seismic signals caused by nuclear explosions from the signals emitted by earthquakes. I ask the hon. Gentleman to bear those problems in mind.

Our studies show that seismic disturbances have to register at least four on the Richter scale for them to be reliably detected. Without crossing this detection threshold, however, large nuclear tests could be conducted by employing a number of evasion techniques, which are well documented in scientific literature and which might appear attractive options to a state wishing to cheat on a CTB treaty. Moreover, the threshold for distinguishing nuclear tests from the many thousands of earthquakes that occur around the globe each year is significantly higher than for the mere detection of a seismic disturbance, and would not, under a CTB treaty, rule out the dangerous possibility of clandestine tests at yields of up to several tens of kilotons.

I have set out in detail our anxieties on technical questions, because adequate verification is at the heart of the matter and there are serious problems still to overcome.

So-called peaceful explosions cannot be distinguished in character from tests of nuclear weapons. That is why we attach importance to verification on peaceful nuclear explosions and we have tabled a paper on that issue.

I should like to deal more expansively than I did last night with what the hon. Gentleman has said about linkage with the non-proliferation treaty. Article 6 of that treaty requires nuclear parties to show that they are using their best endeavours to make progress towards nuclear disarmament. Indeed, that is the Government's objective. I do not want the hon. Gentleman to get the impression that the Government are not interested in seeking a comprehensive test ban treaty. I make it plain that we are interested in that; it is one of our objectives.

However, it would serve no one's interests for progress towards a comprehensive test ban to be artifically linked to continued adherence to the non-proliferation treaty and its future. That treaty is important in its own right and we must not jeopardise it by holding it hostage to progress in other areas, however important they may be.

However, I stress that that does not detract from the importance that we attach to the Geneva talks making progress. We give our fullest possible support to those talks and we hope that they will make progress. We hope that, by the time the review conference meets in the autumn, there will be evidence of progress. We also attach importance to making progress on a comprehensive test ban.

I have dwelt on the technical aspects of verification to save the House and the hon. Gentleman from falling into the trap of thinking that the signature of an effective test ban treaty is merely a question of political will and to dispel the suggestion that verification is no more than a political smokescreen. I hope that I have made it plain to the House that the technical problems are real and solid.

I reiterate that the premature conclusion of a treaty that did not contain adequate verification provisions would not serve our interests or those of our allies. However, we

[Mr. Richard Luce]

remain committed to seeking progress towards a comprehensive test ban, as does the hon. Gentleman, and we will continue to take an active part in the Geneva conference on disarmament in discussions about the problems of verification.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 10 June 1985

The House met at half-past Two O'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Air Services

1. **Mr. Coombs** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the average fares per mile on scheduled air services between the United Kingdom and *(a)* Amsterdam and *(b)* Paris.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): Since our agreement last year with the Dutch, lowest fares between London and Amsterdam have fallen by as much as 44 per cent. The lowest fare to Paris has risen by 4 per cent. I have placed details of the fares in the Library.

Mr. Coombs: Does my hon. Friend agree that the figures are remarkable and demonstrate the importance of opening up European air routes to maximum competition? Does he recognise the need for continuing negotiations with the French about the London-Paris route, which has shown not a remarkable improvement but a deterioration? Will my hon. Friend tell the House how the negotiations are proceeding?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend is right to say that the new liberal regime with the Dutch has had a dramatic effect on travel between London and Amsterdam, which in the last year has risen by almost 17 per cent., against the European average of 10 per cent. I am hoping to see in the next few weeks the French Minister responsible for aviation to discuss how to improve fare structures between Britain and France.

Mr. Skinner: Instead of spending so much time with his continental counterparts, will the Minister do something constructive for Swindon and stop rail closures which will result in mass unemployment?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about Amsterdam.

Mr. Spicer: In the first part of his question the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) implied that he did not agree with what we are doing to achieve lower fares for our country men who want to travel to Europe, but we shall press on.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my hon. Friend approach these important negotiations with the treaty of Rome and its important free competition provisions in mind? Is it not prima facie the case that a number of countries, including France, are not acting according to the spirit of those provisions?

Mr. Spicer: Yes. The Government are becoming increasingly impatient over the fact that the provisions of the treaty of Rome, which apply to manufacturing, do not seem to apply to services—especially not to aviation.

2. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to persuade other European countries to agree to more liberal air service arrangements with the United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): We have negotiated liberal air services arrangements with the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg. We are in the course of discussions with France, Italy, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries, and are maintaining pressure for the establishment of a liberal air transport policy by the European Community.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for, and congratulate him on, the progress that he has made. Which countries are dragging their feet? Would it not be a good idea to open negotiations with countries outside the EEC, such as those in Scandanavia, to bring home to them the benefits to their tourist trade of lower fares, and so hit in the pocket those countries which are being obstructive?

Mr. Ridley: We are approaching non-EEC countries, such as Norway, Sweden, Austria and Switzerland, to try to negotiate liberal arrangements with them. My hon. Friend will be reassured and pleased to hear that of the 10 new services to the Netherlands six serve regional airports in Britain, and that two out of six new services to Germany also serve regional airports.

Mr. Stephen Ross: May I encourage the Secretary of State to extend his negotiations to east European countries, such as East Germany? It seems ridiculous that we should not be able to fly direct to Berlin without having to go to Amsterdam or Brussels and then half way round the Baltic. Is there any chance of making progress with those countries?

Mr. Ridley: That is a rather different proposition. They are not used to liberal private enterprise competitive arrangements in those parts of Europe. I shall bear in mind, however, the hon. Gentleman's exhortation that I should persuade them to be so.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: When my right hon. Friend has his negotiations with the French Government on this issue, will he try to persuade them that it is crazy for them to keep a closed shop both on fares and services to Strasbourg, which is, after all, meant to be the headquarters not only of the European Assembly but of the Council of Europe? They are unduly restrictive in terms of fares and planes flying to Strasbourg.

Mr. Ridley: I agree with my hon. Friend. On the route to Paris and to other airports in France, including Strasbourg, there seems no reason why we should not have a completely liberal arrangement. We are continuing to urge that view on our French friends, and we can only hope that my hon. Friend's supplementary question will have contributed to that end.

Mr. Steen: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the major problem is the pooling arrangements which the state airlines enter into with each other? Will his measures and sensible White Paper help to liberalise the arrangements, provide more competition and help to break the cartel?

Mr. Ridley: I only wish that I could bring the pooling arrangements to an end. We have made that view clear in the Council of Transport Ministers and shall continue to do so. I am afraid, however, that I must tell my hon. Friend that it takes two to reach an agreement—it takes two to tango in these matters—and that until we can persuade the other European states to accept a more open transport regime we shall not succeed.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my right hon. Friend, when considering the whole matter of liberalisation, try to persuade his Department and foreign Governments to give greater encouragement to small independent airlines, BCal and others, to come forward and take up opportunities? Will he, at the same time, discourage British Airways from trying to hog the whole lot?

Mr. Ridley: I assure my hon. Friend that my Department needs no encouraging in that direction. Nor do I. He will agree that my record, both in connection with the civil aviation review and the airports White Paper, has been to try to find ways to encourage the smaller independent airlines to have more opportunities and more room for growth.

Nationalised Industries (Purchasing Policy)

3. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to encourage nationalised industries for which he is responsible to buy from British firms wherever possible.

7. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has issued any guidance to the British Railways Board concerning the nationality of companies tendering for new locomotive and carriage contracts.

Mr. Ridley: In line with the Government's purchasing policy, we would expect to see nationalised industries choosing to buy British, provided the products and prices are right. In the last few days the BR chairman has reaffirmed that that is indeed BR policy.

Mr. Evans: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that it would be a disaster if major British companies such as GEC and its Ruston diesel works in my constituency did not win the contract for the next generation of British Rail locomotives? Will the right hon. Gentleman make it clear to the chairman of British Rail that it is essential that should there be any tenders from foreign companies for the next generation of locomotives, they must be subject to the most rigorous scrutiny to ensure that there are no hidden subsidies or unfair competition in those tenders?

Mr. Ridley: Two main locomotive orders are coming forward, one for the Electra class 91 electric locomotives and the other for the replacement of the freight diesel locomotives. There are now three contenders, as it were —three tenderers—for the first. British Rail has not yet gone out to tender on the second, although it is much the biggest programme. I assure the hon. Gentleman that BR is acutely aware of the desirability of getting competitive prices and standards of performance from British manufacturers, and I hope that it will succeed in doing so because we all have the same interests in mind.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Secretary of State aware that when Mr. Bob Reid, the chairman of British Rail, was interviewed recently about the locomotive orders he stated clearly that there are no inhibitions on placing orders abroad? Would it not be idiotic to see British Rail ordering those locomotives from France, America or Japan? Does the Minister believe that any of those countries would place orders in this country?

Mr. Ridley: On the hon. Gentleman's last point, many overseas markets are open to British Rail Engineering Ltd. If we are to be able to sell our railway stock overseas, we should be prepared to buy overseas. In relation to the hon. Gentleman's first point, I shall quote from *Railnews*, in which the chairman of British Rail said:

"the Board's policy is to buy British whenever the product and the price is right; we buy 95 per cent. of our goods, supplies and services from British firms."

So the chairman is aware of the sort of views that the hon. Gentleman expresses.

Mr. Adley: Is the problem not just the reliability of some British Rail engines, but the lack of extensive manufacturing runs available to British diesel engine manufacturers? Will my right hon. Friend study what was done by the Conservative Government in the 1930s when they gave assistance to private railway companies? Will he do likewise and place orders at Government expense with British manufacturers for some prototypes to enable British Rail to make detailed and extensive tests?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend correctly mentions reliability. There are more complaints from hon. Members about punctuality on the railways than any other subject. If we are to improve punctuality, we must have reliable railway engines which do not break down. That is why it must be right for British Rail to ensure the reliability of the products that it is now seeking to buy. It is for British Rail to decide which prototypes it will purchase. It has been purchasing several prototype locomotives so that it can assess their performance.

Mr. Robert Hughes: The Secretary of State mentioned overseas orders available to British Rail. Is he not aware that foreign buyers will not buy British products if our railway system does not buy them? Why does he not put some investment into British Rail to help its workshops to develop new coaches and various things? Why does he not do something instead of whining all the time about the need for competitiveness?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. He will be aware that a number of foreign railways have purchased from British Rail Engineering Ltd. Mexico has recently ordered a number of International coaches. If we are to keep such markets open, we cannot declare a policy that our market will be closed. I am not remotely prepared to do that. If the engineering industry can sell to British Rail —winning competition on prices and standards—it can win orders overseas at the same time, because it will be in a superior position to do so.

Mr. Viggers: Does my right hon. Friend agree that attractive though protectionism may seem in individual cases, it is contrary to the European Community rules and would lead to disaster for us as a major trading and exporting nation? However, will he ensure that our European partners are as fair as we are?

Mr. Ridley: I agree with both my hon. Friend's points. A protectionist policy would not just be illegal under our obligations under the treaty of Rome, it would be

disastrous because it would encourage our industry to lose its competitive edge and thus be unable to earn more orders in the world market and create more jobs.

Mr. Snape: Does the Secretary of State accept that under this Government we have already seen the closure of Horwich railway works, that we are shortly to see the closure of the Swindon railway works and that outside the inter-city network British Rail is falling apart? Is it not about time that the Government started defending British railway engineering expertise instead of giving aid and comfort to our competitors, and started to protect British workmen and an industry which this country gave to the world instead of seeking continually to undermine it?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman, as always, is wholly wrong. He should know that the high level of investment in British Rail for which he and his hon. Friends have been calling has been delivered by the Government. The result of that investment is that the products do not need so much maintenance and repair. That has been the cause of the lack of work for British Rail Engineering Limited. If the hon. Gentleman does not know that, he should ask the union that sponsors him to tell him.

Services (Signposting)

4. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to make it easier for restaurants, garages, hotels and guest houses in rural areas to have their facilities signposted on trunk roads.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): The signing of hotels in rural areas is becoming progressively more established, along with the further development of holiday route signs. I have recently introduced a system of white and brown signs where facilities such as fuel, meals and accommodation can be found off the main road. I have also begun a general review of direction signing, and I will consider any suggestions for improvement.

Mr. Beith: I am grateful to the Minister for her answer, but in that case why is it that services in Northumberland, on bypassed sections of the A1, face endless obstruction in their attempts to get reasonable signs? Is the Minister aware of the extent to which the county council claims to be acting as the agent of the Secretary of State in refusing those signs? Does she realise how difficult it is for small businesses which want to maintain the passing trade that is available?

Mrs. Chalker: I am well aware of how difficult it can be for small businesses which want to maintain the passing trade. There is no obstruction, I hope, in Northumberland or anywhere else to the mounting of signs. I know that there was a case at a place called Scremerston recently, but that is very much in its early days, and we are looking at it with Northumberland county council.

Mr. Neale: I thank my hon. Friend for the careful consideration that she always gives to the matter, and for her recent announcement of a review. Nevertheless, will she accept that small businesses and tourism in areas such as the west country would gain immeasurably if there were an early announcement of the principles on which approved signs can be constructed? Does she agree that the evidence obtained from the trials of the brown and white signs supports the introduction of such signs far more quickly in areas such as the west country?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is right about the review of direction signs. It is much needed, and I hope that, as a result of new measures that I am taking, it will be finished much earlier than we originally predicted.

With regard to the use of brown and white direction signs for communities that are now bypassed, I shall be happy for any county council—Devon and Cornwall or any other—to have the brown and white signs if that can be agreed with the British Tourist Authority.

Cyclists

5. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with the progress being made by local authorities in providing improved facilities for cyclists; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I am encouraged by the progress being made by many local authorities, but facilities need to be accompanied by constant attention to safety on the part of all road users.

Mr. Dormand: Is the Minister aware that there is a growing desire among local authorities to provide facilities for cycling, but that they are unable to do so because of the Government's restrictive policies concerning local government finance?

As the Minister is such an enthusiast for cycling, will she say what action she is taking to try to end the contradictory situation in which the Government are urging local authorities to do something and are then preventing them from acting because they do not have the money to do it?

Mrs. Chalker: It would be wrong for us to dictate to local authorities exactly what, within the overall highways budget, their priorities should be. Every year they are asked to submit a transport policy and programme in which they are invited to give their criteria for cycling schemes. I shall be happy to note those and respond to such TPPs through the TSG. It is, of course, up to local councillors to decide what their priorities are within the overall highways budget.

Mr. Forman: My hon. Friend referred in her first answer to provision for safety, which is obviously very important. As a cyclist, I can assure my hon. Friend that it would help greatly if the Government were to make early progress with legislation dealing with motor vehicle emissions and black smoke from buses and lorries. That is one of the most unpleasant aspects of cycling in urban areas.

Mrs. Chalker: I agree with my hon. Friend about emissions from vehicles which are not properly maintained. The traffic examiners have a right to stop such vehicles. With our speedy progress towards lead-free fuel, we shall certainly make progress in the next few years.

Coach Services

6. **Mr. Parris** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many long-distance coach services have been registered; and what has been the increase in passengers carried by express coach since October 1980.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since October 1980 more than 900 new services have been registered, of which some 700 are still running. That is a 20 per cent. increase in the number of all-year services. Passengers on the National

Bus Company's national express services have increased by about 50 per cent. since 1980. We believe that the independent operators must have increased their carryings by an even greater figure.

Mr. Parris: What has been the effect of those remarkable improvements on fares?

Mr. Spicer: Since we liberalised long-distance coach services in 1980, fares have been reduced in real terms by between 15 and 40 per cent., and on some routes fares remain lower than they were five years ago. Fare reductions combined with greatly inproved services explain the dramatic increase in business for long-distance coaches.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Minister agree that the increase in passengers carried by the express coach services has been closely paralleled by a massive reduction in the number of passengers carried on rural stage carriage services? Does he further agree that if the Transport Bill is based on that principle people in rural areas know what to expect?

Mr. Spicer: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the decline in rural bus services has been a long-term factor, which is precisely why we have introduced the Transport Bill. It will bring back life once again to rural bus services.

Mr. Higgins: I welcome the improvement in long-distance coach services and the reduction in fares, but is my hon. Friend aware of the anxiety caused by some coaches which appear to exceed the 70 mph limit? As the tachograph does not provide an adequate means to check that, will he consider the installation of some other device that will do so?

Mr. Spicer: We must always be vigilant about exceeding speed limits. During the past year there have been signs of greater compliance with limits. That is a matter for continual vigilance by the police. The Bus and Coach Council has issued its own code of practice, and we hope that the bus industry will comply with it.

Mr. Cartwright: Is the Minister aware of the problems caused by the rapid growth in the number of coaches in central London? Even before we reach the height of the tourist season, many London streets are clogged by parked coaches, which causes major problems for other road users. Has he received representations about that, and what action will he take?

Mr. Spicer: I am informed that we are studying the whole question of congestion in the London area. It has as much to do with the great increase in tourism as with the liberalisation of coach services outside London.

Mr. Gregory: Bearing in mind my hon. Friend's comments about the deregulation of long-distance coaches, and the carping by the Opposition, and in particular unions, such as the Transport and General Workers Union, that we would see the decimination of long-distance coaches, can he draw any conclusions regarding the deregulation of short-distance coach and bus services?

Mr. Spicer: My main conclusion is that the Opposition are likely to be as inaccurate in future about short distance services as they have been in the past about long-distance services.

Mr. Stott: On the latter point, only time will tell. In addition to giving the number of long-distance coach operations that have been registered since 1980, will the Minister tell the House the number of small and intermediate-sized towns which prior to 1980 were served by long-distance coaches, but are no longer served by them? If he considers that fact, I am sure that he will conclude, as I do, that many towns are no longer served by long-distance coaches, as a direct consequence of the 1980 legislation.

Mr. Spicer: We know that the number of long-distance services between towns has increased considerably. I have already accepted that there has been a long-term decline in rural services, but we hope to increase those services in future.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Has the deregulation of long-distance coach services had an effect on safety regulations?

Mr. Spicer: One must never be complacent about safety, but I assure my hon. Friend that the safety record of coaches is good and is improving all the time. For instance, during the past decade, fatalities of bus and coach passengers have halved. Therefore, the safety of coach travel is now about equal to that of rail travel.

A127

8. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to improve the A127; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The general public are currently being consulted about a proposal for an underpass at Rayleigh weir. A proposed improvement at the "Fortune of War" is also under discussion with Basildon development corporation. More central reserve safety fencing is to be provided, completing provision throughout. Further improvements will be considered when the effects of the completed M25 have been established.

Mr. Proctor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that list of improvements. Will she confirm that the A127 is a heavily used road and that congestion occurs especially at peak commuter hours? Will not the proposal by development consortia to build a new town of more than 5,000 houses between Bulphan and West Horndon place incredible strains on the A127?

Mrs. Chalker: I have heard about the proposed development at Tillingham Hall. I am aware that an outline planning application has been made. I would expect the local planning authority to consult my Department on the traffic implications for the A127 and especially for the A128 interchange. We shall then consider carefully whether the volume of traffic on the A127 is likely to increase as a result, as traffic on the road between the junction with the M25 and the A128 has increased by about 9,000 vehicles a day since January 1984.

Mr. Amess: Is my hon. Friend aware that people from all over the United Kingdom wish to travel to Basildon but are hampered in so doing by the lack of road signs along the A127, the M25 and the M11? Will she please help us, and deny that this is a conspiracy to keep the whereabouts of Basildon a secret?

Mrs. Chalker: I lived for some time just down the line from Basildon, and I can assure my hon. Friend that there

is no way in which Basildon can be kept secret. I am well aware that the town wishes to be a primary destination. At present, we are conducting a major review of destination and direction signing, in which Basildon is being considered. We are improving the A127 at the junction with the B1007, which will help Basildon.

Mr. Robert Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the A127 goes to Aberdeen.

London Regional Transport

9. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will have consultations with the chairman of London Regional Transport about its advertising policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Advertising policy is a matter for the London Regional Transport board, but I would expect to discuss it with the chairman from time to time.

Mr. Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware of the expensive advertising and misinformation campaign about the excellent work of LRT that has been carried out by the GLC? It includes mendacious stories about pensioners losing their concessionary passes after the abolition of the GLC. Is it not time that LRT was assisted in promoting its cause by means of advertising, and is it not time that the GLC stopped its mendacious behaviour?

Mrs. Chalker: We all live in hope that the GLC will stop spreading false rumours. However, LRT believes in answering propaganda with the facts, which is absolutely right. LRT has stringent conditions on the acceptance of advertising. It does not accept advertisements such as those which were accepted when the GLC removed the ban on political advertising for a while to suit its purposes. I assure my hon. Friend that any misinformation published by the GLC will be answered by LRT with the facts.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does the Minister realise that one way in which LRT can advertise its services is to ensure that everyone knows that they are safe? Therefore, will she make public the report on the £2·5 million fire at Oxford Circus last year, when about 1,000 passengers were trapped underground? There is some evidence to suggest that the report will not be published. Why not?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand that the inquiry into that fire—both LRT and the emergency services are to be congratulated on the way in which they got people out of that situation—was not a formal inquiry. I shall look at what the hon. Lady said, but there is no question of anything being hidden away, as her question might imply.

Road Safety (Research)

10. **Mr. Knowles** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about his Department's programme of research to improve road safety.

Mrs. Chalker: We have an active programme of research into a variety of road safety issues, including vehicle and highway design, as well as road user behaviour. I am currently reviewing our priorities for the next few years.

Mr. Knowles: Will my hon. Friend confirm that part of the plan covers highway engineering, which is of importance to all constituencies and to all hon. Members who represent constituencies close to the M1?

Mrs. Chalker: This is a matter of concern to everybody, wherever they live or do their constituency work. In addition to the £1·6 million out of the total of general highway engineering research, other research is going on in the Transport and Road Research Laboratory. We are carrying out extramural research with various universities and others because we want to keep the position that we have achieved of having some of the best highway engineering in the world.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister examining the safety of public service vehicles in the light of recent coach accidents? For instance, is it possible to consider whether anti-roll bars should be insisted on? If so, what possibility is there of legislation that might bring them into effect as soon as possible?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, because I share it. He will know that we have been discussing coach safety with the working group in Europe, because not just British coaches but coaches from all over Europe and beyond are involved. We are progressing on two fronts: first, the provision of anti-roll bar equipment; and, secondly, seats against which any passenger might be thrown and the provision of belts in the front. There is also the provision for drivers. So far we have not reached agreement, but we are pressing on as fast as we can.

Mr. Churchill: In view of the success of the introduction of compulsory seat belts in private motor vehicles, how long will it be before there will be at least the provision of seat belts in public transport vehicles?

Mrs. Chalker: There is nothing to stop an operator putting at least a lap belt in a public service vehicle. However, the problem is that there is no central gangway support to which one could attach a shoulder belt, which is the safest belt of all. That is why we have been actively pursuing rsearch on the seat strengths to hold passengers in. I cannot give my hon. Friend an exact time, but we are discussing this in the high-level working group.

Mr. Leadbitter: Has the Minister considered the considerable contribution to road safety that can come from the construction of concrete barriers? Has her Department examined that possibility; and, if so, have any recommendations been made to the local authorities which may be concerned with the problem?

Mrs. Chalker: I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to central reservation barriers. The laboratory at Crowthorne has looked at these, but they have not been found to be as safe as we believed. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman about the latest position on road safety barriers.

Mr. Ward: Is my hon. Friend aware that road safety between London and east Dorset has been considerably improved by the opening of the extension of the M3? Is she further aware that those who use that road regularly congratulate both her and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on their persistence in getting this important section of road opened at last?

Mrs. Chalker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks, but I can only repeat that any road can only be

as safe as the drivers upon it. They have to drive within the limitation of their vehicles and the road and weather conditions of the day.

Mr. Stott: What steps is the Minister prepared to take to enforce the reduction of spray from heavy lorries? She will be aware of products on the market that are specifically designed as spray suppressant units. A number of them are very good. They substantially reduce the levels of spray generated by lorries on the motorway. Is it not time that she brought forward construction and use regulations to compel manufacturers and owners of lorries to fix spray suppressant units to their tractors and trailers to cut down the amount of spray that is generated on our motorways?

Mrs. Chalker: In the past 12 months I have brought in construction and use regulations to require the need to fit spray suppression equipment. As time passes and greater experience of such equipment is gained, I am sure that there will be a case for tightening up those regulations and possibly for extending the fitting of this equipment to other types of vehicles, which is not required at present.

British Rail (Equal Employment Opportunities)

12. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the issue of equal employment opportunities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): It is the duty of the board to adhere to statutory requirements and within that to develop its own employment policies.

Mr. Cohen: The recent Equal Opportunities Commission report shows that there is widespread sexual discrimination in British Rail's recruitment and employment policies. Of the total work force, only 7 per cent. are women. They are very few women drivers and guards and very few women in management. Indeed, British Rail sometimes punishes men by making them work with women in some of the heaviest jobs, an example of which is carriage cleaning. Will the Minister take prompt action on the report to ensure that the management of British Rail works towards equal opportunities?

Mr. Mitchell: The British Railways Board is keen to co-operate with the Equal Opportunities Commission. However, the report is only a draft. We in the Department have not seen it. Therefore, I am in no position to comment on its contents.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Community Law Centres

40. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement regarding the Government's policy on the future of community law centres.

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): The Government have acknowledged that law centres may have a part to play, where this suits local circumstances, in the provision of legal services. Central Government support for law centres continues to be provided primarily under the urban programme, in accordance with its general principles and procedures. Such centres are seen as essentially matters for local decision and initiative, depending on the value which local authorities and communities place on them, according to local circumstances.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the Attorney-General for accepting that law centres provide a valuable public service. Given the variety of funding sources, would it not be of considerable assistance if the Lord Chancellor accepted responsibility for at least co-ordinating and overseeing the centres in a supportive way? Is the difficulty really that the Lord Chancellor lacks statutory authority to do this, or is it that the Department of the Environment and the Lord Chancellor's Department are passing the issue back and forth from one to the other?

The Attorney-General: There is no question of their passing the buck from one to the other, as has been suggested on a number of occasions. The Lord Chancellor does not have statutory power. He has taken over the seven law centres which his predecessor funded without authority and has maintained their funding. The rest are funded through the Department of the Environment. The Government's view is that circumstances vary so much from area to area that it is much better that a centre should be initiated and maintained by the local area. However, not only local authority money is involved. The centres are also maintained partly by charitable assistance and voluntary subscriptions.

Mr. Franks: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the provision of law centres is at the discretion of the appropriate local authority, that many law centres are provided by Left-wing authorities, and that it ill becomes the Opposition to criticise when the remedy lies in the hands of those self-same local authorities?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is quite right about one specific case. Because Lambeth has not yet made a rate, it has said that it is unable to assist its law centre. There is no doubt that law centres have provided a necessary degree of assistance.

Mr. Foster: Will the Attorney-General admit that there are very wide gaps in the availability of legal advice on benefits issues or on some aspects of housing, for example? In Newton Aycliffe, in my constituency, hundreds of new owner-occupiers cannot get the advice that they require about the Housing Defects Act, and local lawyers do not seem to have a clue. Could not problems of this sort be more properly handled with a system of law centres up and down the country?

The Attorney-General: Law centres, which were created largely as a result of local initiative, have been able to assist where legal aid is not available in non-contentious matters. The question overlooks the benefit of the help given by citizens advice bureaux, which are often able to provide the kind of information to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Coombs: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the present piecemeal method of funding community law centres gives the impression to many people that the Government are not wholly committed to their value?

The Attorney-General Community law centres have been funded largely out of Government money, but the initiative should lie with local people — the local authorities, charities and other voluntary bodies.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Attorney- General aware that people will be grateful for his acknowledgement of the value of law centres? However, does he agree that it is unsatisfactory that the law centres do not know from year to year whether they will be able to continue in existence because they have to await a decision on the urban aid programme?

The Attorney-General: The funding of community law centres depends not only upon the urban aid programme, but upon whether local authorities are prepared to state their future plans for their law centres. However, in respect of those law centres which have been given a guarantee of only two years, I can give the House an undertaking that a decision will be taken before the end of the financial year.

Mr. Neale: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that although law centres may be necessary to fill gaps in some areas, in areas where local provision is already made by other organisations, either professional or voluntary, it would be ridiculous for that advice to be duplicated, and even more ridiculous for a national blanket provision to be made for it by the Government? Is it not far better for local authorities in each area to decide whether there is a gap to be filled?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend has set out exactly the reason which caused us to take this decision.

Mr. John Morris: As the Attorney-General has stated that the Lord Chancellor lacks statutory authority over law centres, will he look sympathetically at an amendment to provide such authority during the proceedings on the Administration of Justice Bill?

The Attorney-General: I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows that on this matter I am simply the agent of my noble and learned Friend. Therefore, I should have to consult him about it.

Circuit Judges

41. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Attorney-General how many circuit judges there were in June 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively; what is the present establishment of circuit judges; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The numbers of circuit judges were: 1 June 1982, 335; 1 June 1983, 346; 1 June 1984, 353; and 1 June 1985, 374.

Mr. Carlile: I welcome the increase in the number of circuit judges. However, does the Attorney-General agree that there are still intolerable delays in the trials of serious cases in the Crown courts? Is there not still a considerable need for the appointment of more circuit judges? Does he also agree that it is the judges who carry much of the responsibility for speeding up the terrible delays which sometimes occur in the police force and in the DPP's Department over the processing of cases quickly for trial?

The Attorney-General: I can give the lie to that question. Between 1979 and 1984 the number of committals for trial to the Crown court increased by over 50 per cent. Despite this surge, the average waiting time, because of the appointment of additional judges and the provision of extra court rooms, has been reduced from 17·3 weeks in 1979 to 14·2 weeks in 1983, and in 1984 it was held at 14·3 weeks. By the appointment of extra judges—those appointments will have to continue and we expect there to be 440 circuit judges by the end of this decade—the waiting time figures have been reduced. I agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman that the delays are still far too long and that we must continue to do everything that we can to reduce them.

Mr. Ashby: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the increase in the number of cases coming to trial may be because the magistrates' courts—not the circuit courts or the Crown courts—cannot devote the time that is necessary to deal with the kind of defended cases that can be dealt with in the circuit courts?

The Attorney-General: The problem goes even further than that. The percentage of acquittals ordered by judges was, I think, 40 per cent. of all those who pleaded not guilty in the circuit courts. There must be something wrong, and that something is that some cases that should never have been sent to trial were so sent. In the Metropolitan police area, a large percentage—I believe about 40 per cent.—of cases are committed for trial without a solicitor of the Metropolitan solicitors' department seeing them. To some extent, that is why I issued the guidelines about prosecutions. When we have the new national prosecuting service, we should have much more control. I hope that there will not then be so much wasted time, which causes agony to the defendant, especially when he should never have been sitting in the dock in the first place.

Mr. John Morris: During the process of the legislation that first designated circuit judges, I believe that the Lord Chancellor said that there would, from time to time, be promotions from the circuit to the High Court bench. Am I right in thinking that in the past couple of years there has been only one such promotion? Does the Lord Chancellor still hold to that policy?

The Attorney-General: I am afraid that I do not know the answer. I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman is right, in that most of the promotions to the High Court Bench have involved members of the Bar.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

43. **Mr. Bowen Wells** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the delivery of food aid to Ethiopia.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): Total food aid deliveries to Ethiopia so far this year are 680,000 tonnes. The European Community and its member states have delivered 204,000 tonnes since the European Council in Dublin last December, the Community share of which is 124,000 tonnes. We stand ready to provide up to 10,000 tonnes more bilateral food aid when we are satisfied about the arrangements to be made for its transport and distribution in Ethiopia.

Mr. Wells: Is my right hon. Friend aware of how frustrating it is when one tries to find out exactly what is happening from the European Commission? In the past month I have tabled several written questions, only to receive equivocal answers. Those answers are given in both committed and delivered terms, but we never find out

what has been delivered to the people who need it and to those who are starving in the Sudan, Ethiopia and southern Saharan countries. Has not the problem of delivery been exacerbated by the fact that, despite my right hon. Friend's urgings, the European Commission waited nearly three months before getting started on the railway which could deliver food to the western Sudan and Darfur? The quantities that the European Commission has delivered are far short of what is needed and what it undertook to deliver at Dublin and before then.

Mr. Raison: With respect to my hon. Friend, the figures that I gave are delivery figures. I am not saying that in every case they relate to what has been delivered to individuals. My hon. Friend will understand that it is remarkably difficult to give accurate figures for that. Nevertheless, I have given delivery figures.

My hon. Friend's point about the railway refers to the Sudan rather than to Ethiopia, which is the subject of the question. However, I think that he will know that progress is now being made towards getting the railway line to western Sudan working effectively.

Mr. Beith: Are not the revelations of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs about the double counting of EEC aid and the Department's budget pressures so important and urgent that they cannot await the normal process of Government response and debate in the House before something is done?

Mr. Raison: Hon. Members will have a chance tomorrow to debate all these matters. However, it is only right that we should reply to the Select Committee in the usual way, and we certainly intend to do so before the House rises for the recess.

Mr. Baldry: Does the assistant secretary-general in Addis Ababa, who has responsibility for co-ordinating activity, send the Government details of what aid has been delivered and whether it is getting through to those who need it? If so, how often are they sent to the Government? Is my right hon. satisfied with their detail?

Mr. Raison: We have the closest contact with Mr. Jansson through our embassy in Addis Ababa. I cannot say exactly how often such reports come, but from reading the telegrams I know how much detail there is and how regularly the whole question is discussed.

Dame Judith Hart: Has the Minister heard, perhaps on the radio this morning, the appeal of United Nations officers in the area for more vehicles to expedite deliveries in Ethiopia and, particularly, in Sudan? What response is he likely to make to that appeal? One's impression is that the right hon. Gentleman has a certain complacency towards the provision of vehicles.

Mr. Raison: The next question on the Order Paper is specifically about vehicles, and I shall give some information then. In Ethiopia, which is the subject of the question, there are, I believe, a large number of road vehicles available. I have been pressing the Ethiopian Government to make available the substantial number of trucks that they have available but which are not being used.

Ethiopia

44. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about vehicles available for relief and rescue operations in Ethiopia.

48. **Mr. Forman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the Government are providing for transport of relief supplies within Ethiopia.

Mr. Raison: About 3,000 long and short haul trucks are needed in all. Of these, about 1,300 are currently deployed, including 350 recently made available by the Ethiopians. A further 450 trucks pledged by donors should arrive soon and we hoped that the Ethiopians will provide more. We shall now provide further assistance of £750,000 for transport needs in Ethiopia, including semi-trailers and truck hire costs. In addition, and provided it can operate effectively during the rains, we have decided to extend the British airlift until 30 September. It will then be withdrawn after 11 months' magnificent work.

Mr. Chapman: I welcome the latter part of my right hon. Friend's statement, but does he agree that it is an absolute disgrace that the Ethiopian Government have failed to carry out the commitment that they gave some months ago—which was both practicable and reasonable — to provide 4,000 vehicles for the much needed distribution of aid in parts of Ethiopia? Has my right hon. Friend made any estimate of the additional suffering caused to the Ethiopian people by that oppressive non-commitment of their Government?

Mr. Raison: I cannot give any such estimate, but for some months we and other Western donors have been pressing the Ethiopians to fulfil their earlier promises to provide vehicles. They have at last undertaken to deploy military vehicles and all other available transport to increase the daily take-off from the port of Assab from 1,200 tonnes to 4,000 tonnes a day to clear congestion there. I hope that that exercise will be carried out successfully.

Mr. Forman: I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnett (Mr. Chapman). Do the 350 vehicles that the Ethiopians have already made available represent a significant part of total transport needs? If not, will my right hon. Friend put on record the number of vehicles that the Ethiopians could use if they were minded to do so?

Mr. Raison: The 350 vehicles are a valuable and significant contribution. I believe that the Ethopians have about 4,000 military trucks. The more trucks that are made available, the sooner the task of transporting food across the country will be able to proceed.

Mr. Maclennan: Why has the Minister announced the proposal to discontinue our valuable transport service after 11 months? Does he believe that the service is complete?

Mr. Raison: I believe that by the end of September there should be sufficient road transport available. It already accounts for 90 per cent. of the distribution of food and other relief supplies. Moreover, the roads should be usable after the rainy season.

Famine Prevention

46. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a

statement concerning initiatives of Her Majesty's Government designed to prevent the recurrence of famine disasters.

Mr. Raison: Under our regular aid programme, we shall seek any new opportunities to anticipate and to cope more effectively with famine. At the Bonn economic summit we agreed with our partners that the expert group established to prepare proposals for follow-up measures in relation to the African drought and famine should report to Foreign Ministers by September 1985. We are also supporting moves by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation to improve its early warning mechanisms.

Mr. Spearing: Is not the regular aid programme a bit askew? Have not the Government reduced by up to 25 per cent. the personnel of the Tropical Development Research Institute who are concerned with preventing the sort of disasters that we have seen? Will the Minister review that disastrous decision and make an announcement on this important matter even before he replies to the Select Committee's report, which advocated restaffing those important units of the ODA?

Mr. Raison: As the hon. Gentleman says, we have made cuts in the personnel of the TDRI, but it is still a highly effective unit which is appreciated across the world, and it is doing extremely valuable work in Africa and elsewhere.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that when we are discussing famine relief and aid generally there is a danger of our overlooking the point that *The Times* leader made today—that Africa is now virtually the only continent which is unable to provide sufficient crops for the relief of its own citizens? Does my right hon. Friend also agree that as long as there are regimes, such as those in Sudan and Ethiopia, which are a great deal more concerned about their political ideologies than about the care of their citizens, no end to the problems is in sight?

Mr. Raison: I agree that Africa's food problems are very much complicated by political factors, but we must recognise that there is a strong need for resources and expertise. We play a substantial part in providing both.

Questions to Ministers

3.30 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware of the anxiety expressed by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House today about coach safety. When I have tabled questions on the matter, I seem to recall being informed by the Table Office, or by the Department of Transport, that central statistics are not kept and are therefore not available in so far as they relate to coach accidents. My hon. Friend the Minister's announcement today appears to contradict that earlier evidence, however, so could could you ensure that, if information is available to the Department of Transport, it is also made available to hon. Members?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot give that undertaking, but if the Table Office is responsible for not allowing the hon. Gentleman to put down a question, I shall look into it.

Mr. Rajab

3.31 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you received any request from the Foreign Office to make a statement on the deplorable incident relating to the Syrian diplomat Mr. Rajab? This is a matter of the gravest importance, about which there are full reports on the radio and in newspapers to the effect that the diplomat is to be expelled by Friday if the matter is not resolved satisfactorily. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that hon. Members should not be the last people to know.

Mr. Speaker: I have sympathy for the hon. Gentleman's latter comment, but I have received no request for such a statement.

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE (AMENDMENT) (No. 2) BILL

Dr. David Clark supported by Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Jim Callaghan, Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mr. Ron Davies, Mr. Peter Hardy and Dr. Mark Hughes presented a Bill to amend the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to improve and clarify certain procedures under section 28 of that Act relating to notification of proposed sites of special scientific interest: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 July and to be printed. [Bill 156.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the two questions on statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Value Added Tax (Hiring of Goods) Order 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 799), dated 22nd May 1985, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Deer (Firearms, etc.) (Scotland) Order 1985, be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Opposition Day

[8TH ALLOTTED DAY]

[SECOND PART]

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

3.32 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I welcome the decision to mark, by this debate, the 15th anniversary of the Royal Assent to my Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Bill.

The House of Commons was never more constructive in its concern for people in special need than it was in its attitude to the Bill in the parliamentary Session 1969-70. There was no party animus in our proceedings. Everyone who spoke, whether here on the Floor of the House or upstairs in Committee, seemed to know the value of things as well as their cost.

It was a rare parliamentary moment when unity of purpose, in an important cause, triumphed over every other consideration. In a television programme on the Bill's enactment and effect, the presenter said:

"It is difficult now for anyone to remember what life was like for disabled people before the passing of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act."

Her statement to a huge national audience was a reminder of how far we have come, since the Act became law, along the road to full public recognition of the problems and needs of disabled people and of their now undoubted right to equal citizenship.

As the television presenter went on to say, we have seen a vast number of improvements in provision since the Act received the Royal Assent 15 years ago. Far more money is spent on cash benefits and services alike. Quantum leaps have been recorded in the numbers of people identified as disabled by their local authorities and millions of people with disabilities have had their lives made better by the provision of aids and by adaptations to their homes, as by the Act's wholly new emphasis on improving access to public and social buildings.

In the entirely new climate which the measure created, spending on benefits and services for chronically sick and disabled people went up in the Act's first decade, and under successive Governments, from £330 million in 1971-72 to £3,030 million in 1981-82. In my own five years as Minister with responsibility for the disabled, the increase in spending was from £590 million in 1973-74 to £1,830 million in 1978-79.

I do not wish today to catalogue every improvement or to analyse at length all the effort that has gone into the implementation of the Act since 1970. That has been done in a number of important books, notably "Disability: Legislation and Practice" by Duncan Guthrie and others, and "Charter for the Disabled" by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and Eda Topliss. I must, however, stress again in this debate that the enactment of my legislation was the work of a very wide

fellowship of people. What brought them together, when I won first place in the private Members' ballot in November 1969, was a long-awaited opportunity to try to achieve social justice for disabled people.

My supporters included all the individuals and groups to whom my friend Maureen Oswin paid tribute in another important book when she spoke of

"the many unknown people who work for reform . . . professionals who put their careers in jeopardy in order to speak out against injustices to handicapped people . . . parents who campaign for years in order to bring about changes which sometimes take so long to come into effect that their own children do not benefit from them . . . researchers and writers who produce papers and books which help to change attitudes and bring about reform . . . and the voluntary organisations and pressure groups which do so much to create changes at local and national level."

Among countless others, they were the kind of people and groups who provided the impetus for the Bill's enactment. In their thousands they helped to transform the climate of parliamentary and public opinion from one of, at best, benign charity to one of acceptance that disabled people are entitled to live independent and dignified lives as full members of the community.

It must seem incredible and outrageous to many people now, but between 1945 and 1960 there was no mention in the manifestos of either of the main political parties of anything that might be done specifically to help disabled people. Between 1959 and 1964 there was not one debate in the House of Commons on disability. Notwithstanding all the advances in medicine, technology and communications, official attitudes to the claims of disabled people were both deadpan and dismissive.

It was through knocking on the doors of disabled constituents and trying to help those who knocked on my door, as well as from experience twice over of disability in my own family, that I became strongly convinced of the need for legislation to improve the well-being and status of disabled people. In Manchester alone, I knew of cases galore of disabled people who had every kind of moral justice on their side but no statutory right whatever to the help that they so vitally needed. If I was able to assist, more often than not it was as a guide through the maze of local charitable organisations or by asking a more than usually helpful local authority to stretch its permissive powers to breaking point. Even then, the beneficiaries were left with the feeling that they had been awarded a privilege for which they should be most truly thankful.

Every advocate of change knew that the permissive powers given to local authorities to help disabled people under the National Assistance Act 1948 were of only token value and that there was no likelihood of the law being changed by ministerial initiative. That applied even to the insistent claims for more humane provision for the many thousands of severely disabled young people whose appalling fate at that time was to be incarcerated in geriatric wards. I was much involved in campaigns to expose the treatment that those young people received, and heavy and protracted correspndence with DHSS Ministers left me deeply aware of the hopeless divisions in departmental responsibility for those and other disabled people and of strongly entrenched official opposition to legislation.

I was left with a fixed determination to change the law myself, if ever I had the opportunity to do so. The presenter of the television programme that I mentioned went on to recall

"just how close the Act came to not being passed."

This may now be news to most people, even to the vast majority of disabled people who have ben helped by the Act's provisions. But for the Back Benchers who worked with me on the unlikely enterprise that we launched in 1969 — notably my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), the Honourable John Astor, my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones), Sir Neil Marten and my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) — the memory of how frequently close we came to disaster is abidingly clear. As the Act reaches its 15th anniversary, it is therefore appropriate for me warmly to acknowledge the unfailing help which they and other hon. Members on both sides of the House gave in enacting my private Member's Bill.

Our Bill became an Act of 29 sections. It affected 12 Departments of State and was a model for legislation in many other countries. We amended 39 existing Acts of Parliament, including such major statutes as the Public Health Act 1936, the Education Act 1944, the National Health Service Act 1946, the National Assistance Act 1948 and the Housing Act 1957. We also made provisions, including those on access for disabled people to the built environment, where previously there was no legislation of any kind to amend.

At first I was not at all optimistic about the Bill reaching the statute book. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham has shown in the book "Charter for the Disabled", there was strong resistance behind the scenes from the late Richard Crossman, then Secretary of State for Social Services, to many of the Bill's provisions. There was also the problem of finding enough parliamentary time to complete all stages in both Houses of Parliament of what had become a very wide-ranging Bill.

To make matters worse, the parliamentary Session was cut short by the announcement in May 1970 of a general election. Lobby journalists then reported that the Bill was irretrievably doomed, but a very strange thing happened. My Bill had won strong all-party support, and was given precedence over most of the Government's own legislation in the few remaining days before Dissolution. It became law on the final day of the 1966-70 Parliament.

Conservative leaders, including the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who became Prime Minister after the election, had made a strong commitment to the Act's philosophy and provisions. In fact, just before the general election was announced, they became pledged to enact my Bill themselves should it fall through lack of parliamentary time. Not for the first time, however, there was a gulf between political commitment in opposition and positive action in government, and the Act undoubtedly lost some momentum due to the change of Government in June 1970.

Through lack of clear ministerial guidance, many people were unaware of the Act or that the Act applied, where appropriate, as much to the mentally ill and mentally handicapped as to people with physical and sensory disabilities. Others thought that, as the Act had originated as a private Member's Bill, its provisions did not have the same force as Government legislation. There is, of course, no such thing, but the new legislation was even referred to by some local authorities as a private Member's Act. This was responsible for slow reactions in some parts of the country, as was the myth that the Act had no financial backing.

Most unusually for a private Member's Bill, the Treasury had moved in the House of Commons and had

[Mr. Alfred Morris]

carried, without a division, a money resolution in support of my Bill. Had that resolution not been approved, the Bill could not have made any further progress and would have fallen on procedural grounds. Therefore, the many anguished reports about the cost of the Bill having to be met by local authorities were as baseless as its description as a private Member's Act.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): While my right hon. Friend is recounting the near miracle of getting the Bill on to the statute book, will he remind us that it was Lord Peart who at the time enabled the money resolution to be got through the House and that had it not been for his action the Bill would never have reached the statute book?

Mr. Morris: My hon. Friend, who himself played an important part throughout the Bill's proceedings, has anticipated my next remarks. Lord Peart was extremely helpful at all times. Without his help, and that of many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, the Bill could not have become law.

In 1970 it was said that the Bill was an extremely ambitious measure for any private Member to introduce. Looking back, I regret that it was not even more wide-ranging and that some of its provisions were not made stronger. The five sections on improving access to the built environment, for example, could have gone further. The legislation as a whole could have been applied to Scotland and Northern Ireland sooner. Again, I regret that the Bill did not make it illegal to discriminate against disabled people.

No legislation is ever the last word, and I am happy to say that the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act has been more widely applied and made stonger in recent years. Its access provisions now extend to places of employment and have been strengthened in their effect. The Act as a whole today applies to Scotland and Northern Ireland and has thus become United Kingdom legislation.

The most pressing problem now is not naming an early date for any major new advance, but of doing all that we can to defend the services which the Act provides. Powerful voices are asking for more flexibility in applying the Act, by which they mean the right to dilute the provisions. Some local authorities protest that they now have to choose not only which of their discretionary powers to use, but even which of their legal duties to fulfil. Rate-capping and further cuts in rate support grant have made their dilemma even more cruel. "Must we break one law to stay within another law?" is how some council leaders sum up the agonising choice which they face.

It is not only Labour-controlled councils which protest. The Minister should read the extremely bitter comments on the Government's assessment of his borough's needs in a letter to *The Times* by Norman Hawkins, the Conservative leader of Hillingdon.

One official study after another makes it plain that local authorities now find it more and more difficult to fulfil their statutory duties to disabled people. Let us consider home helps. The number of people aged over 75 continues to increase, but the home help service is rapidly declining in terms of cases served and hours of service. Yet the over-75s need the home help service most, and the provisions of section 2 of the Act are clearly not reaching many of them in the way intended by the House when enacting my Bill.

The Secretary of State for Social Services uses the slogans of community care, but the Secretary of State for the Environment punishes every local attempt to make it a humane reality. For the city of Manchester, the capital allocation for social services for 1985-86 has been cut by a despicable 69·5 per cent. compared with last year. How does that help my city in trying to cope with its duties under the Act towards mentally handicapped people? Many other hard-pressed authorities fare little better, and yet we are told by the Secretary of State for Social Services of his total commitment to community care.

Essex county council has imposed a minimum £2 charge, regardless of income, on everyone using the home help service. Many desperate people on supplementary benefit in the county are unable to pay and no longer have a home help. They have lost a service which their county council has a legal duty to provide under section 2 of the Act. The legal advice to the present Minister, as it was to me when I was Minister between 1974 and 1979, is that a local authority cannot lawfully withdraw a service without diminution in need on the part of the disabled person.

The Prime Minister and her colleagues gave a pledge to disabled people that they would be "singled out" for special help. Yet in Essex, which includes the constituency of the Minister with responsibility for the disabled, disabled people say that they have been "singled out" for special hardship and that the law has been flouted to their detriment. How does the Minister answer that charge, of which he has been aware for many weeks, and what action has he taken?

Is it still the Government's policy that local authorities should not charge disabled people on supplementary benefit for their home helps? If so, should he not have strong words with Essex county council both about its repudiation of that policy and its discontinuance of the home help service to disabled people without diminution in need?

The legal requirements of the Act are not in dispute, as I was told in a letter sent to me by the Prime Minister on 23 January 1985—she wrote:

> "Thank you for your letter of 27 December about the reply I gave to Tony Lloyd in the House on 13 December about the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act. I am grateful for this opportunity to clarify the position . . . You can rest assured that it was not my intention in any way to question the statutory duties imposed by the Act on local authorities, nor to indicate any change in the advice given to successive Ministers for the Disabled on this point. I am sorry if the wording of my reply suggested otherwise."

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act imposes a duty on the local authority to assess the needs of anyone who is permanently and substantially disabled in its area. It also has a duty to provide for a disabled person's need within a reasonable time.

The corollary of this duty, as I made clear more than once when I was the Minister, is that no local authority may lawfully discontinue a service to a disabled person if his or her need for the service has not diminished. Nor is it lawful for a local authority to plead lack of funds as a reason for not providing a service. Again, although it may recover charges for a service, a local authority may not refuse or withdraw a service if the disabled person is unable to pay.

Why, then, has the Minister not made this clear to Essex, where many disabled people over 80 years of age who are dependent on supplementary benefit, and without

diminution in need, now no longer have their home helps? Will he do so in this debate, and will he now respond to the protest of local authority leaders, of all political persuasions, who ask why they should be denied the resources they need to provide disabled people with the services that this House intended for them?

The Minister cannot deny that there is now a growing and grievious gap between the services that Parliament intended for disabled people and the provision made for them in many parts of Britain. In 1983-84, the net expenditure per head of population on services for physically and sensorily disabled people ranged from £3.91 in the London boroughs to £1.73 in the shire counties.

In London, Camden spent £8.38, compared with Sutton's 87p. In the south-west, Avon spent £3.49, while Cornwall spent £1.42. In Wales, West Glamorgan spent £3.34 and Dyfed £1.27. In the east midlands, Nottinghamshire spent £2.91 and Lincolnshire £1·52. In the west midlands, Wolverhampton spent £4·41 and Shropshire 80p.

How does the Minister justify those variations? As he knows, I quote from figures supplied by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Is he not disquieted by the institute's findings, and what action has he taken since they became known to him?

The Minister must be aware that this debate occurs at a time of very considerable anxiety about the effects for disabled people and their families of what the Government are proposing in their Green Paper "Reform of Social Security". Peter Large, of the Disablement Income Group, who has the respect of hon. Members in all parts of the House, has estimated that many disabled people on supplementary benefit now rely very heavily—to the extent of 20 to 30 per cent. of their total incomes—on payments for additional requirements to help offset the extra cost of disabled living. He refers, among other extra costs, to those for laundry in cases where the disabled person is incontinent, special diets, wear and tear of clothing and extra heating. He states:

"The proposed income-support scheme will sweep away these payments for additional requirements, replacing them all by a special premium for chronically sick and disabled people. If the premium is anything less than 30 per cent. of the basic income support payment, disabled people will again be among the losers."

The House will recall that disabled people were the losers when the supplementary benefit scheme was simplified by the present Government in 1980. They were also among the losers when the available scale margin was increased from 50p to £1 and extended to reduce heating allowances in 1984. How much longer must they be the losers?

Even if the Minister cannot provide detailed figures, will he today at least try to give disabled people some reassurance about the percentage of the basic income support they can expect as a premium? Can he also give the House an assurance that the Government's proposals in the Green Paper will not be allowed to result in any reduction, in real terms, in the totality of expenditure on provision for disabled people and their families?

Dr. Peter Kemp, housing research fellow at the university of Glasgow, has said that industrial disablement pensioners could face cuts of up to £20 a week if the Government's proposed changes in housing benefit go through. Will the Minister comment on that, and, if he disagrees with Dr. Kemp, will he give his own estimate of the effect on the industrially disabled of the Government's proposals?

As to the social fund which is proposed in the Green Paper, the Disability Alliance has said:

"The scheme will mean degradation for claimants and DHSS staff. It will force claimants to beg at social security offices for payments they desperately need. As well as cutting their income, it will strip away their legal entitlement to payments which they presently have as of right."

The proposed social fund will be under the discretion of the local DHSS office and some payments will be repayable loans. The DHSS offices will be cash limited, so what will happen to disabled people who claim after their local office has run out of cash? With payments on a discretionary basis, the Disability Alliance wants to know how a local office will choose between Mr. Jones claiming for fares to visit his terminally sick wife in hospital and Mrs. Smith claiming for fares to visit her dying child? The Disability Alliance goes on to say:

"Claimants' humiliation will be heightened by proposals that DHSS staff will help them budget. This is a gross insult . . . which will be made worse in many cases by having to pay back loans to the DHSS itself."

How does the Minister respond to these comments on the Green Paper? He cannot deny that they come from people who are as well-informed as they are representative. Failure to respond to them today will deepen concern among people for whom needless worry piles handicap on handicap.

The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation has been in touch with me about the new board and lodging allowances for people on supplementary benefit. This was an issue that I raised in the House on 24 May, and most of the questions I put to the Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, remained unanswered at the end of the debate. What RADAR says is that there is considerable alarm in the voluntary sector that the new board and lodging regulations as applied to residential and nursing care will lead to people being thrown out of homes when they can no longer afford to pay, or, if they are lucky, ending up permanently in hospital.

Local authorities are, of course, now in no position to pick up the pieces and RADAR states:

"There is increasing evidence that the level of care which the best homes in the voluntary sector seek to provide cannot be provided within the limits set. Particular anger is directed at the different limits for disabled people according to whether they became disabled before or after pension age."

I shall be grateful if the Minister will respond to that statement also when he replies to the debate.

I urge the Minister today to assert the priority of the claims of disabled people. We have to look within groups as well as between them. Among the elderly, the disabled are more hard-pressed and have problems and needs over and above those of the generality of elderly people. If, in a one-parent family, the parent or child is disabled, that family will usually be worse off and more at risk than other one-parent families. The same applies within other groups and strongly emphasises the priority of the claims of disabled people. It is also the answer to those who now demand more "savings" in expenditure on disabled people.

The calls for cuts in benefits, as for more flexibility in applying the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, have to be resisted in the interests both of disabled people and of the taxpayer. Most people with disabilities face a higher cost of living than other people. They do so with lower than average incomes. The services that Parliament

[Mr. Morris]

intended them to have under the 1970 Act are not a luxury or a privilege but a vital necessity if they are to live independently and as full members of society. There is ultimately no gain for the taxpayer in depriving them of those services. In fact, the cost of driving people into institutional care is often higher than that of allowing them to live, with the help of support services, in the community.

The description that I like best of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act is that for disabled people it was a first step into the light. Everyone who worked for its enactment can rejoice in the fact that it has been a model for legislation in many other countries across the world.

I am delighted, as the Minister must be, that the debate coincides with the visit to Britain of a distinguished delegation of people who work in the field of rehabilitation in China. The delegation is here until 17 June and is led by Wang Luguang as a senior representative of the China Welfare Fund for the Handicapped. He is accompanied by Qu Degui, as director of the international department of the fund, and by their colleagues, Liu Jing, Huang Dashu, Wang Dajue and Gao Jian. The Minister and I, together with my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South addressed them on their arrival in London on 4 June. They are here at the invitation of the British Council and the Sino-British Group on Rehabilitation, of which His Excellency the Chinese Ambassador and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs are patrons.

The delegation's close interest in the relevance to China's disabled people of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act has been a source of special pleasure to many of their hosts here. Wang Luguang and his colleagues are our honoured guests, and I am sure that the House as a whole would want them to convey, on their return to China, our warmest best wishes to all their colleagues for success in their endeavours in the service of disabled people there.

One of the central purposes of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act was to challenge what Sir William Oastler, talking of those who can afford every comfort, once called that

"serene satisfaction with the status quo".

The Royal Assent to the Act was welcomed by informed people in the statutory and voluntary sectors alike. There is still much to do if all its objectives are to be achieved and, until every locality has a level of provision equal to that of the existing best, the battle for fuller implementation of the Act must and will go on. None of the very wide fellowship of people who helped to enact my Bill ever doubted the size and gravity of the task that we confronted. Our hope was that, by working together to change the law, we could also change the status quo for disabled people and end the "serene satisfaction" by which they were oppressed. That still has to be our resolve.

4.4 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I, too, am very pleased that the House has the opportunity today to mark the 15th anniversary of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, the passage of which attracted considerable attention at the time and, as the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) has very fairly recognised, received, has continued to receive and will continue to receive a very wide measure of all-party support.

The concepts which the Act embodied—being aware of the needs of disabled people, supporting them in their own homes, giving them greater assistance with mobility, and greater access to a range of everyday facilities—command very strong support in all parts of the House. I say without hesitation and with pleasure that it is appropriate that the debate should be opened by the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe, in view of his personal contribution and his continuing commitment to the purposes and working of the Act.

On hearing the right hon. Gentleman's historical account of the difficulties which attended the birth of the measure, I was left almost feeling that it is easier to review the whole of the social security system than to go through what the right hon. Gentleman went through in an earlier period of his life.

I, too, was very pleased to have the opportunity last week to join the right hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) in meeting the deputation that is here from the China Welfare Fund for the Handicapped, and to be able to assure them that we in the United Kingdom will do everything we can to help them in any way we can with their efforts to develop services for disabled people in China.

I am particularly glad that there have already been contacts between those concerned with the question in China and the formidable group of people with interests in disabled people in Hong Kong, which I happened to visit last summer, including the well known Dr. Harry Fang, a former president of Rehabilitation International, who attaches great importance to building up the links between Hong Kong and China in this respect.

I am particularly happy that, as a result of a co-operative exercise in which a number of us have been engaged—certainly the three of us who were present at the China Welfare Fund for the Handicapped last week—we were able to make arrangements for the supply of a number of hearing aids to China. I hope that will be seen as a practical demonstration of our good will. I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South for the part that he has played in that exercise.

I do not mean to diminish the importance of the individual details and provisions of the 1970 Act when I say that in many ways its greatest impact and importance has been in its effect on the awareness of the needs of disabled people, not just within this House or in Government but at every level in society. Indeed, there can be very few Acts of Parliament of what is essentially a rather specialist nature which have made, directly and indirectly, so considerable an impact, and whose title has become almost a household word.

The Act undoubtedly marks a significant milestone in the history of services for and of attitudes towards disabled people and, if I may change the metaphor, it has provided a foundation on which all succeeding Governments have sought to build.

Over the past 15 years, many hundreds of thousands of disabled people have gained not only from the greater development of direct practical help, such as domestic assistance in the home, house adaptations, aids, the provision of telephones and so on, but from those

provisions designed to open up opportunities and facilities for disabled people which have since been built on and supplemented by other developments.

Section 1 of the Act addresses itself to the importance of assessing the overall needs of disabled people and of ensuring that they are aware of the services available to them. Both those concepts have a wider application which the Government have sought and continue to seek to develop further. As the House knows, about 18 months ago we announced, together with the social security reviews, our intention to commission the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to conduct a new national survey to gain more up-to-date information about the extent of disablement and its effects. The last such survey, the well-known Amelia Harris survey, was carried out at about the time of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and is therefore about 15 years old. Much of the information that it gave us is out of date, and the survey has significant gaps, especially about disabled people in residential care. The new survey — the first major survey during that entire period—will help us to gain the sort of up-to-date information that we need for further planning for services and cash benefits for disabled people. In due course it will become an important part of our data base for carrying further the purposes which both sides of the House share.

A further important feature of the Act is its emphasis in section 2 on practical support for disabled people in their home, which goes closely with the concept of care in the community and the programmes to that end, which have subsequently been developed and reinforced. The Government — the right hon. Gentleman acknowledged this in a backhanded way — have sought to place growing emphasis on that through the development of joint planning, the extension of joint finance and the funding of pilot programmes. Those are all exercises in which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security has had a significant hand. We have given extra powers and extra cash to allow health authorities, local authorities and voluntary organisations to build and enlarge the care in the community programme.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my hon. Friend assure the House that every possible recourse is made to the European Community on pilot projects? It is extremely keen on pilot projects for the handicapped, and we wish to tap every possible source.

Mr. Newton: I could hardly agree more with my hon. Friend's suggestion that we need to tap every possible source. To the extent that I or my hon. Friend can play a part in laying our hands on additional EC money for our community care purposes, she can be assured of our enthusiastic assistance and support. If with her experience and knowledge of the European scene she has any bright new ideas about how we can get more of that money, I hope that she will not hesitate to let one or both of us know of them. I assure her of a prompt response.

Regarding joint finance and care in the community, I re-emphasise the importance that we attach to the legislation which we passed in 1983, and which is beginning to come into effect. It ensures that voluntary bodies are represented on the joint consultative committee concerned with the care in the community programmes. I know from my constituency that that is beginning to happen. The voluntary organisations attach importance to it, as do the Government. It is a fruitful development of the decision-making machinery in this area.

The 1970 Act also gave statutory recognition to the need for adequate access provision for the disabled, not merely to specialised health or social service buildings, but to all the general facilities open to the public. It would be an understatement to say that over the years a great deal of attention has been given to that issue, for example by the work of the silver jubilee committee on access and the committee on restrictions against disabled people. We as a Government attach great importance to the access issue. As the right hon. Gentleman acknowledged in his speech, it is one of the areas where the provisions of the 1970 Act did not go far enough.

The decision recently announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to amend the building regulations to ensure adequate access provision for disabled people to all shops, offices and single-storey public buildings was welcomed on all sides of the House and well beyond the House. Although I know that many would wish that we had already been able to go further, it has been firmly stated that my right hon. Friend hopes to extend those provision further when work on satisfactory means of escape requirements has been completed.

The access committee for England, which I established a little more than a year ago with DHSS funding by building on work by my predecessor my hon. Friend the Member for Honrsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), to whom I readily pay tribute, has made a considerable impact in its first year of operation, not least by drawing together consumers and providers of buildings in constructive debate about some of the complex issues involved. I have been immensely encouraged by the progress of that committee and its vigorous start. Indeed, it was a pleasure to me that the announcement about the building regulations was made at an important conference organised by the acces committee for England a few months ago. I have no doubt from the work that it has already undertaken that its activities will be of major benefit to all local access groups, now established throughout the country, in their efforts to improve access locally.

In having a hand in setting up the committee I was particularly concerned to ensure that the committee should include planners, designers, providers of buildings and a considerable number of the disabled who would represent the consumer voice. That reflects a theme of the 1970 Act —the need for the interests of the disabled themselves to be acknowledged, and wherever possible for them to participate in the decision-making processes. I am happy to say that that principle has been readily embraced not only in the Government, but in many other public and commercial areas, with examples far beyond the original confines of the Act.

The statutory requirements in the Telecommunications Act 1984, both for British Telecom to take account of the needs of disabled people and for the Director General to establish a committee to advise him of the needs of disabled people and elderly consumers, is a clear example. So too is the decision by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Transport, whose long-term interest in the needs of the disabled is well known to the House, to establish an expert advisory panel on disability to help guide her Department's policies.

[Mr. Newton]

As I have ranged wide, I shall return to the specific provisions of sections 1 and 2 of the Act, which deal with the practical support which local authority social services departments should be providing for disabled people in need. For many people those services have undoubtedly represented the most concrete and beneficial manifestation of the Act. It is perfectly proper that over the years those aspects have attracted most attention and interest from hon. Members, and today have brought many comments from the right hon. Gentleman.

I recognise that criticism has been voiced that local authority provision is not monitored closely enough by the Government, that restraints on local authority expenditure inhibit its power to meet the needs identified in that Act, and that the original Act needs to be reinforced in some way to remedy those alleged defects. On monitoring, local authorities are well aware of their duties under the Act, and it is clear that they take them seriously. Detailed guidance was issued to accompany the Act, and dealt with, for example, the way in which the numbers and needs of the disabled may be sought. At present I do not believe that there is a clear need for further detailed guidance. Apart from anything else, the Act leaves it to authorities to determine need in relation to individual cases, and how best to meet it. That is both right and an important principle.

Local authorities are the best judges of local circumstances, and are best able to assess the needs of the individual. Detailed guidance prepared by a Government Department, however well-intentioned, would not be an adequate substitute for on-the-spot decisions by the authorities that are closest to the needs of the indvidual and the services which exist in his area. More important, there is always a risk that minimum standards — in practice that is all that we could sensibly talk about—would be treated in some cases as maximum standards and would inhibit some of the developments that we would wish to see. They would restrict rather than enlarge the scope for flexibility and innovation.

Often, the results of innovation by some authorities and by voluntary organisations have been the spur to progress in this area. For example, some local authorities have been experimenting with different means of providing care in the home. There has also been a movement away from institutionalised and group provision for holidays towards more individual provision in mainstream holidays. There have been more partnership arrangements with voluntary organisations in the planning and delivery of services. I would not wish to inhibit such successful development by appearing to give guidance from the centre, which might all too easily become a straitjacket.

However, to acknowledge that local authorities are the best judges of local needs is not to absolve them of their statutory duties under the Act. We have always made that clear, and have always been prepared to pursue investigations where prima facie evidence is submitted to us that a local authority may be in default of its duty.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Does the Minister have any comment to make on Wirral authority, which is in breach of its statutory responsibilities by not budgeting for adaptations?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to make a judgment such as he invites in an exchange across the Floor of the House. I am aware of the comments that have been made about Wirral authority and, as he will know, we are making inquiries of the authority to enable us to judge the criticisms that have been made. If I can add to that when I respond to the debate later this evening, I shall, but the hon. Gentleman will accept that that is as much as I can sensibly say in response to his intervention now.

Mr. Field: I suspected that the Minister could not answer me now, but it would be helpful if he could give us an idea of when he expects to reply. We are debating the important anniversary of the Act, and in Wirral there is no money to carry out the adaptations that are an important part of the Act.

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's request, and if I can help him further at the end of the debate, I shall. However, he should understand that the inquiries that we make when we hear suggestions of a breach of statutory duty—there have been more than 20 over a fairly long period—take some time to carry out and involve us in considerable correspondence with authorities. If I cannot help him further today, I shall ensure that his query is answered as soon as possible.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe made several observations about financial resources. It is obvious that local authorities must make difficult choices, as must central Government, at a time of budgetary and financial constraint. I must make the basic point that the Government believe that it is essential, in the interests of the economy and not least in the interests of restraining inflation, which must benefit the disabled, that local authority overall expenditure is controlled. The adoption of sensible priorities is in no way inconsistent with the proper provision of direct services to vulnerable groups such as the disabled.

I am strengthened in that view by the fact that the Audit Commission states that there is still scope for saving in local authority support and administrative costs. Until some of the local authorities which are complaining can convince us that they have examined the range of their services to ensure that they are delivering value for money, I should be somewhat sceptical about some of the claims that are made about their ability to provide the services about which we are talking today.

The Government believe that local authorities can continue to bear in mind the interests of vulnerable groups within the financial resources available to them. After all, local authority budgets for personal social services increased by 21 per cent. in cost terms between 1978-79 and 1984-85. That is a long way from the cuts about which we sometimes hear. Those figures are reflected in the fact that, between 1979-80 and 1983-84, expenditure by local authorities on personal aids increased by nearly 40 per cent. in cost terms, and the number of cases of such assistance increased by 37 per cent. During the same period, expenditure on assistance with providing telephones to the disabled and the elderly increased by nearly 12 per cent. in cost terms, and expenditure by local authorities on residential homes for the younger physically disabled, blind and deaf increased by nearly 51 per cent. in cost terms.

I shall require much more persuasion than the right hon. Gentleman was able to produce today before I am convinced that the resources made available by the

Government within their framework of policies make it impossible for well-organised local authorities to provide the services that the disabled require.

The right hon. Gentleman referred not only to the workings of the Act but to the Government's Green Paper on social security as it affects the disabled. There is no doubt that, alongside the improved services which we wish to offer and for which the Act has been an important part of the framework, the wider opportunities that we try to offer to the disabled, including improved access to buildings, the third main arm of the Government's policy towards the disabled must be the provision of an adequate framework of financial support. Without wishing to labour the Government's record in this area, I should say that we have increased expenditure on benefits for the long-term sick and disabled to £4 billion in 1984-85, which is more than 35 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1978-79—the year before we took office. As part of that, we have improved the structure of benefits for the disabled, for example, by introducing the severe disablement allowance to replace the non-contributory invalidity pension, and by removing the invalidity trap, which kept many long-term sick and disabled people on the short-term lower rate of supplementary benefit rather than the higher long-term rate. I could mention several other points, including the improvement in the mobility allowance.

However, in response to the right hon. Gentleman's queries, I should start by saying that I hope that no one on either side of the House will attempt to suggest that there has been anything other than widespread dissatisfaction with the present supplementary benefit scheme. Hon. Members may have different views about the Government's proposals and about possible alternatives, but there can be only one view about the unsatisfactory nature of the present scheme. Everyone will have heard comments that it is too complicated for the staff, let alone claimants, to understand; that some aspects of the scheme —especially those relating to disability—can lead to intrusive and humiliating questioning; and that in the areas of greatest pressure, the present rules do not allow a sufficiently flexible response to individual need.

It is to meet those criticisms that the Green Paper proposes a major reform, which will replace the present system with two new schemes. The first is the new income support scheme to provide regular weekly incomes for claimants. All claimants will receive a personal allowance based on their age. For those with families, there will continue to be children's scale rates, and, in addition, there will be a new flat rate family premium. I should make it clear, because I am not sure whether it has yet been fully appreciated, that where a family has a child in receipt of attendance or mobility allowance, the family will receive a double family premium.

For groups with extra needs, such as the long-term sick and disabled, there will be a further system of premium rates. On top of the basic personal allowance would be a premium for all pensioners, which would be higher for the over-80s, for lone parents and for the long-term sick and disabled. For this purpose, all claimants receiving invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance, attendance allowance and mobility allowance, as well as those who are blind, would get the disablement premium automatically. There would be no separate rules about time on benefit.

Where the claimant's partner is getting one of these benefits, the couple would get double benefit premium, regardless of the status of the claimant. In both cases, where the claimant or partner does not, for one reason or another, qualify for one of these passporting benefits, there would be an alternative link to benefit—28 weeks incapacity for work would also qualify the claimant for the disability premium.

I shall attempt to list briefly the advantages of these proposals. First, they will be clearer and more comprehensible and will avoid, as a routine matter of setting basic benefit rates, the sort of questioning, for example, about laundry needs, and conceivably about bathing, that can occur. Secondly, they will be more consistent with the pattern of invalidity and disablement benefits and in particular fairer to those who may fall narrowly outside the qualifying criteria for mobility allowance and attendance allowance that are used for certain passporting purposes to some of the additional payments.

Thirdly, for those who qualify by incapacity—this is an important point—the proposals will mean getting the premium rate after 28 weeks, whereas at present such people have to wait a year before going on to the longer-term scale rate. Some 20,000 long-term sick and disabled people have been in that position for between six months and one year.

Fourthly, the blind will qualify automatically for the premium, which is likely to be of particular advantage to those who are not judged to be incapable of work and do not therefore at present receive the longer-term scale rate.

Fifthly, because in setting the premium we shall have regard to the existing expenditure on additional payments, the new system is likely to do more to help the 50,000 or so long-term sick and disabled claimants of supplementary benefit who at present receive no such additional payments. We have heard a good deal both in the debate and in other quarters about those who receive a number of additional payments. However, 50,000 people get no additional payments and therefore clearly stand to have their position assisted by our proposals.

Sixthly, as I have already made clear, families with children who are disabled as measured by mobility or attendance allowance receipt will automatically receive the double family premium.

Seventhly, I repeat that the disability premium will be payable to claimants with disabled partners on the more widely measured basis that I have described, instead of being limited mainly to the circumstances of the claimant. To put that point more clearly and specifically in terms that I am aware will be picked up by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), that means that an unemployed claimant with a disabled wife as measured in the way that I have described will receive the disablement premium, whereas at present he would normally be on the short-term scale rate of benefit.

Mr. Pavitt: The hon. Gentleman has clearly spoken about the premium being automatic. Does this mean that, over the whole range of new proposals, there will be many fewer means-tested benefits and less requirement for people to be able to show that they have a deserving case in the various categories?

Mr. Newton: We are in danger of some confusion of terminology. We are basically talking about a means-tested benefit in the replacement for supplementary benefit. However, it is clear that, because of the

[Mr. Newton]

simplification of the benefit structure to incorporate the disablement premium and the extent to which that disablement premium will go automatically to a fairly wide group of claimants who are manifestly long-term sick or disabled, there will be a reduction in the amount of intrusive questioning that such people have to face before gaining entitlement.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): What exactly will the double premium be?

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Government have made it clear that for the present we are debating the proposed structure of income support and that until the details of the structure have been settled following consultation, it would not be sensible to seek to elaborate specific benefit rates that at any rate would not be coming into effect until April 1987. I fear that I cannot help the right hon. Gentleman with a specific figure for the family premium.

Mr. Alfred Morris: On the point made by Peter Large, is it possible for the Minister to speak about percentages? As he knows, the Green Paper is long on ideology and very short on figures. The Minister cannot help us with figures, but he should be able to help us to some extent with percentages, and to reply to the important point made on behalf of the Disablement Income Group, among other organisations.

Mr. Newton: I accept that my life would be easier if I were able to respond in the way that the right hon. Gentleman has suggested, but the difference between giving percentages of basic benefit rates and actual figures is not large enough to enable me to respond differently from the way in which I replied to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) or to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) who asked me somewhat similar questions on Thursday last week.

Mr. Frank Field *rose*——

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman and I had about 10 minutes on this subject last Thursday, and I do not wish to detain the House as long this afternoon.

Mr. Field: I shall try to be more brief. Is it possible to answer the question put by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) earlier? Will the Minister give a guarantee that no disabled people on supplementary benefit will be made worse off by these moves?

Mr. Newton: I have given signs that significant numbers of disabled people are likely to gain within such a structure but I cannot, for obvious reasons, put figures on the numbers. However, our intention will be to make sure that at the point of change in the system, there will be protection against cash losers in income support. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a guarantee that all disabled people will be gainers and none will be losers in cash terms if no other considerations apply. However, I can say that, to the extent that there might be some who would otherwise be losers because of what I would see as a fairer distribution of the newly structured system, it would be our approach to ensure full cash protection on the point of transition. I hope that it is reasonably clear to the hon. Member for Birkenhead and will be thought by the House to be a sensible policy.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe asked about industrial disablement benefit, and the effect for people receiving that benefit on their housing benefit entitlement. Again, it is impossible for me to speculate in detail about the effects on particular people of benefit rates, taper rates and the rest that have not yet been settled and could be settled only once the structure of the system is settled.

However, I hope that it will be clear to the House when I say that one of the key features of the Government's proposed reforms in the Green Paper is a common basis of assessing income and of setting the benefit structure that carries through from income support to housing benefit and the proposed new family credit. The point in that which is relevant to the point raised by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South is that the disablement premium will automatically carry through into what are now called the housing benefit needs allowances because the income support rate in the new income support system will form the needs allowances in the reformed housing benefit system. So the needs of disabled people are also clearly reflected in our proposals for housing benefit.

I want to deal with two other matters affecting the income support scheme. First, we are very conscious of the need to encourage disabled people to remain active to the maximum possible extent. The present earnings rules can undoubtedly be a discouragement for disabled claimants to earn more than £4 a week. We are proposing that single claimants or families receiving the disability premium should be able to earn a significantly higher amount—we have in mind £15—before their benefit is reduced. We believe that this will be welcome to many sheltered workshops, and I know from my own direct contacts that the British Institute of Industrial Therapy will feel that that helps its efforts to ensure a degree of active work and help for many disabled people.

The second matter touches on the capital rule. We are proposing to end the present £3,000 cut-off and to substitute a taper between £3,000 up to a final cut-off at £6,000. Although I do not want to exaggerate this in this context, from the many representations made to me over recent years I believe that that will be widely welcomed not just by claimants generally but particularly by the parents of many mentally handicapped youngsters who set out deliberately to provide some capital support for their children when they themselves have passed on. I hope that that will be a help to them.

Our proposals are concerned mainly with the structure of the new benefit system at this stage, and decisions on specific rates cannot be taken until nearer the time of implementation. However, I emphasise that the Green Paper makes it clear that one of the purposes of this reform is to give greater recognition to the needs of people who are disabled. It is our firm belief that the new structure will make that easier to achieve.

I ought to respond to what the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe said about the social fund, which is the second arm of our proposed replacement of supplementary benefit and which will provide help with budgeting difficulties, funeral expenses and financial crises. Especially relevant to this debate is that it will also seek to provide help with care in the community needs. At present the scheme contains in the rules on single payments a number of provisions to help vulnerable people

to maintain themselves in the community. But, frankly, these areas can get lost in the mass of detailed rules which apply to the system. It can mean that many people may not know of the help available and that the process of decision making is insufficiently able to take account of all the circumstances of certain claimants such as disabled people. In proposing the social fund we want to give greater emphasis to these areas so that the needs of disabled people and others can be handled more flexibly and with greater regard to individual circumstances.

We shall continue to provide help which allows disabled people to move from institutions into the community. We shall continue to provide help with moving and other expenses, such as furnishing needs, for those setting up on their own. We shall continue to help with moving expenses for disabled people to go to more suitable accommodation such as sheltered housing. We shall also continue to help people to visit sick and disabled relatives in hospital.

In view of the anxieties that have been expressed I should make it clear that it is not intended that help of that sort should necessarily be made by way of loan. For the most part, help with moving out of hospital and re-establishing in a community care context would normally be more appropriately met by a grant rather than a loan. There will be areas where we hope that disabled people will benefit from the budgeting and loan-making provisions of the social fund, but in the area of community care plainly it will be more appropriate to do so by way of grant.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): The Minister may be aware that I am rather more sympathetic to the idea of the social fund than even some of my hon. Friends, partly because I have a naively optimistic view of DHSS staff and the way that they may operate it, given the chance. Will the Minister help me by saying whether grants under the social fund will be appealable to a tribunal on the grounds of reasonableness, say, and that it will be possible for those seeking to help disabled people to appear before such a tribunal and assist claimants if they feel that the fund is not being sensitively administered?

Mr. Newton: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's remarks. They give me some encouragement because I respect his judgment in these matters. He will be aware from his evident reading of the Green Paper that we have said that our intention with the social fund will be to make it subject to some form of speedy and flexible system of review within the Department rather than by the semi-judicial process of appeal which currently characterises decisions under the social security regulations. In my view, it is likely to be incompatible with our aim of sensitive and flexible decision making, taking account of the circumstances of an individual's need and not simply trying to apply detailed regulations, as happens with the present single payments regulations, to establish alongside that all the rigidities of a semi-judicial or judicial appeal process.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Can the Minister help me further by saying whether it will be possible to include advocacy in that? Many people in these quite extreme needs find it difficult to present their cases. Will there be the possibility of advocacy by local councillors, social workers or welfare rights workers?

Mr. Newton: That is a matter to which we shall wish to give further thought during the process of working up the social fund proposals. I must again unashamedly fall back on the fact that this is a Green Paper on all parts of which we shall welcome the views of others, including the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft). I shall want to give further thought to his question, but my initial reaction is that I very much hope it will be possible. It is in line with our general wish to ensure that decision making in this area incorporates some of the strengths—I hope not the weaknesses—of social work practice as distinct from rigidly applying social security regulations.

Beyond those reflections on the present single payments system, we wish to work towards developing this part of the new arrangements to promote further our community care objectives. The fund represents in significant ways a new approach in social security administration. It will be important to avoid the risk of being over-ambitious from the start, but I emphasise that it is our intention to enable the system to contribute more effectively than it often does now to a sensible mix of cash and care for vulnerable groups in the community.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West asked about staff. It is also our intention that these arrangements shall be run by specialist staff with special training. We have a core of such expertise at the moment because of the build-up since 1980 of the so-called special case officers who have been concerned with handling the more difficult cases. They have been encouraged in recent years to build up contacts with social service and health professionals. We shall seek to build on that experience, to give them training in handling the more sensitive issues affecting individual claimants and to enable them to serve as a readily identifiable focus for the other welfare interests which may be involved in helping disabled claimants.

We are looking for a system which will be more sensitive than the present one, and not more intrusive. We aim to match the skills needed to apply judgment in handling these community care issues and a response which is less bound by detailed rules and restrictions. We are talking about trained specialist staff handling a limited number of cases with more freedom of manoeuvre than is possible at present.

If we are able successfully to build up those proposals alongside the clearer, fairer and more comprehensible system of income support which I described earlier, we shall both have done a significant service to disabled people in relation to the benefits system and, in doing so, have underpinned those wider objectives of making this a better society for disabled people, which were the foundations of the Act for which the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe was responsible 15 years ago.

4.50 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The Minister for Social Security has unsuccessfully tried to ride two horses at once. He has tried to defend the savage local authority expenditure cuts by the Government. At the same time, he has tried to claim that he is defending the rights of disabled people. The two are incompatible. He cannot support the local authority expenditure cuts because they have severely damaged the living standards of the disabled. If he supports the cuts, he must acknowledge, not gloss over the fact, that they have been severely damaging to disabled people. That was the first two-horse ride that the hon. Gentleman tried to take.

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

The Minister tried to do it on another occasion. He tried to assure us that his review will not damage the interests of the disabled, but at the same time he tried to keep the review figures secret. That, too, is incompatible. He cannot assure the House that the disabled will not be damaged if he is unable to provide figures. We do not know what the figures are. Therefore, the Minister made a sanguine speech which was unjustified by its content. He pointed to the numerous advances that have been made, but they are limited and minor advances. They do not amount to a comprehensive package for the disabled.

The Minister is capable of making good speeches—he is one of the few good Ministers in this terrible Government—but on this occasion he did not make a good speech because he was unable to defend this Government's record and simultaneously to do his job successfully as a Minister with responsibility for the disabled. I intend to deal in more detail with some of the points that he made, but first may I say that I agree with the Minister about the importance of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, which was piloted through the House by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). That Act was a great landmark for disabled people in Britain and, as we have heard from our great friends in China and, indeed, across the world, it has created new opportunities. It gave positive and constructive help to disabled people in need; it changed the climate of the whole country towards disabled people. It was an outstanding achievement, of which my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe can be proud.

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act was passed in 1970. Today, in stark contrast to those heady days, there is a mood of deep disillusionment that has to be contrasted with the picture painted a few minutes ago by the Minister for Social Security. Not just a general abstract feeling of disappointment but in some cases real, deep and grievous hardship is being faced by some disabled people. The tragedy is that that hardship is often unnecessary.

I have recently spoken to some severely disabled people and to three great experts on disablement: first, my wife Pauline; secondly, Molly Meacher of the British Association of Social Workers; and, thirdly, Peter Large of the Disabled Income Group and the Disabled Professionals Group. As all hon. Members know, Peter Large is both disabled and an expert. His views, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe has said, carry very great weight in the House.

All three of those experts have spoken to me of the changed mood among the disabled—of their battles to get any help at all from some local authorities and of the hardship now being endured by many thousands of disabled people. Despite the Minister's speech, that is the reality of disability in Britain today.

One of the cases quoted to me by Peter Large illustrates the suffering of disabled people that can be attributed to the cuts made by local authorities. This case will be familiar to the Minister. It concerns a woman, a tetraplegic, who is being cared for by a very elderly mother whose ability to cope is decreasing week by week. The local authority has tried to cut her home help, and the time of the nurses looking after her, who put her to bed at night, has been cut by more than half. Although her situation has improved recently, she still has to stay in bed throughout the weekend—fancy that—because she can get no help at all then. Her mother is too frail to use the hoist. She has been warned by the local authority that the present arrangements are certain for only six months and that thereafter she could be forced into an institution.

As Peter Large says:

> "For far too many people, care in the community at the moment is an ad hoc, stressful, hand-to-mouth fight for survival—an unhappy existence, often lacking dignity and privacy."

That is a sombre, and, in my view, realistic appraisal by one of the greatest experts on the disabled. He pays tribute to that woman's Member of Parliament and to the Minister with responsibility for the disabled for their help. He says that their help for that woman has been very constructive, but that the personal intervention of the Minister is not the right way to run the welfare state. I agree with him. That should not be necessary. We should not need to call upon the Minister to rectify a grievous anomaly. Even after the Minister has acted, that woman is still confined to bed throughout the weekend. The Member of Parliament has done what he can and the Minister has done what he can, but that problem still has to be faced. I am not saying that that particular example applies to millions of people, but I believe that similar things are happening to many people throughout Britain.

The truth is that many disabled people in Britain are today living in fear. They fear what will be cut next. They have neither confidence nor peace of mind. They fear where the cuts will fall. They are consumed with anxiety about how long their family or the carers can cope without adequate help. Those problems are exacerbated by the proper policy that is being pursued by the Minister of expelling people from institutions and trying to integrate them into the community. The policy is breaking down because proper provision for those people is not being made in the community. They are being denied adequate community care.

One of the original aims of my right hon. Friend's Act was to make it easier for the disabled to obtain the basic help that they require, such as home help, aids and adaptations, but it has become a nightmare of complexity and a veritable Grand National of obstacles to be negotiated by people who are very severely handicapped. Such people are often not given information about their entitlements. They should receive information, because without it they do not know what to ask for or to whom to turn. However, when they are told of their entitlements, they face arguments as to whether they need the help, aid or adaptation. If they win that battle, they then have to be assessed by an occupational therapist. But there is a great shortage of occupational therapists, so they have to wait. It is a national scandal that there should be a shortage of such people. Even if the disabled win that battle and are assessed, they may be told that the aid, help or adaptation is not yet available, which means a further long wait.

The lesson to be drawn from those points and from the experience of many people is that life may be for living, but for far too many disabled people it is merely for existing. It is not the local authority that is mainly to blame for such a deplorable situation, but the Government. They must accept the responsibility. The Government's battles with local authorities are familiar to hon. Members on both sides of the House. However, their financial support for

local authorities has been slashed from 60 per cent. in 1980-81 to 49 per cent. now. The Government are responsible for that savage cut.

Local authorities vary greatly in their attitude towards the disabled. Unfortunately, the Minister was far too sanguine about local authorities. He said that they were the best judges. That may be true in general, but it overlooks the fact that there are many negligent, lazy, greedy, selfish and stupid local authorities that do not care about the disabled. We must face that fact. We must do as we always do, and pay tribute to local democracy, but let us simultaneously recognise that there are bad local authorities that give the disabled in their areas a rotten deal. We should be doing something about them.

Some of us, including the Minister, have argued about the disparate provision of local authorities and called for action. My right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe quoted some figures. Perhaps the Minister will comment on them at the end of the debate. The national average for local authority expenditure on the disabled is £2·07 per head of the population. But perhaps the Minister will comment on other local authorities, such as Sutton which spends 87p, Bury which spends 86p, and Oxfordshire, which is even worse, which spends 75p. How can one defend local authorities that are evidently neglecting the problems and difficulties of severely disabled people, some of whom may be imprisoned in bed all weekend and may have to look to an elderly mother to work a hoist which she is too frail to do?

I could cite many more examples, but I do not want to be emotional. I want, instead, to be practical. I have referred to the genuine practical problems and difficulties being faced by human beings. When we use the umbrella term "the disabled," we are really talking about individuals who suffer grievously. We should attack those local authorities that have neglected their responsibilities to them.

In the Minister's speech, I noticed a regrettable dichotomy in his attitude towards local authorities that he felt had been overspending. He implied that we could not allow authorities to waste money—that they should be businesslike, prune their expenditure, or conduct their business properly. But that attitude should be compared to his attitude towards their decisions on the disabled. On the one hand, the Minister seems to be ready to condemn local authorities if he feels they are extravagant, but, on the other, he is rather complacent if he feels that they are not fulfilling their duties to the disabled.

The Minister implied that we should leave things to the local authorities because they are the best judges of what should be done. That is an unfortunate attitude. The Government are eager to intervene when they think that local authorities are spending too much, but there are never any stern ministerial statements threatening penalties for local authorities that spend too little on the disabled. There should be. The Minister has powers. I accept that he makes investigations, but only about individual cases, and they do not affect the generality of disabled people. The Minister should get the Secretary of State to use his great powers and to take action against recalcitrant and negligent local authorities.

The fundamental issue is one of cash, and the omens for the disabled are grim. The Minister has discussed the new scheme, and he recognises that many severely disabled people rely on supplementary benefit and extra payments just to subsist. I think that 80 per cent. of disabled people on supplementary benefit receive those additional payments. But the Government have plans to abolish those additional payments and to replace them with a higher level of income support. Indeed, I felt very uneasy when the Minister negatively responded to my request for figures. But figureless proposals are meaningless. It is just possible that the average may suit the average person, but disabled people are not average, and their exceptional needs will draw heavily on the social fund. However, that social fund is cash-limited, and when it runs out periodically, those requiring help will presumably receive the same response as Old Mother Hubbard. That would be a sad response to make to people who are in great need.

Disabled people are also very worried about the Government's "enabling" theme for local authorities. Many of them fear that it shows a lack of commitment. I think that they are right. The Government are encouraging local authorities to duck the issue and are failing to extend the necessary and proper pressure on behalf of disabled people. Fine-sounding words from Ministers cannot disguise a lack of conviction or commitment. I do not level that charge at the Minister for Social Security, because he does his best, but in general the Government are failing the disabled. Many of the speeches made about the disabled do not reflect the passionate commitment and determination to act which should be there.

Voluntary organisations are admirable institutions, but they are not renowned for working together. Some of the bickering between them causes heart searching among those of us who are active on behalf of disabled people.

It is, therefore, a demonstration of how worried the organisations have become that they have formed an association called the Voluntary Organisations Social Services Group, which is determined to ensure that voluntary organisations should not become tools of the Government. It knows that the Government are turning from proper local authority provision to excessive reliance on voluntary organsiations and it rightly insists that any special programme funding should be supplementary and not a replacement for local authority services.

Disabled people and voluntary organisations are fighting back against the current disturbing trends. They reject the view implied by the Minister—I deplore his implication — that the Act is laudable, but not affordable. The Act is the law, and the law should be obeyed and enforced. It is the Minister's duty to ensure that the law is enforced, and he will be failing in his duty if he does not ensure that.

We need a number of clear and positive steps from the Government. First, the Act must be enforced, and heavy penalties must be imposed on those who break the law.

Secondly, we need a code of practice for local authorities on the provision of services for disabled people. The British Association of Social Workers produced such a code in 1983, and I hope that the Minister will consider its general application, because it would bring Scrooge-like local authorities into line. The code should include a specific requirement for the provision of information. The DIAL system — the disablement information and advice line — is demonstrating how effectively that can be done.

Thirdly, we need an alternative to the creaking, groaning machinery of getting help to disabled people. Gearing up the whole Heath Robinson contraption of local authority services to provide, say, a bath rail belongs not to pre-1970 but to pre-1870.

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

Fourthly, we need greater participation by disabled people in the decision-making process.

The paternalistic days are over and the involvement of disabled people results in better decisions and preserves dignity. The centres for independent living set a fine example in the sharing of decision making and service delivery between local authorities and disabled people. If those centres are properly funded, they can provide great opportunities for many disabled people.

Disabled people have not only a claim, but a right, to participation in the making of decisions that affect them. They have a great deal to offer and they are willing to offer it. I hope that the House will not turn them down, but will give them an opportunity to play a major role in their own affairs.

We need change, and the debate should mark the moment of change, when the Government began to act decisively on behalf of disabled people and when disabled people played a much larger role in their own destinies.

5.14 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): It is a rare privilege for me to be fourth in a debate in which the three previous speakers have a record on this subject which I should like to match when I have been here as long as they have.

I pay special tribute to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). People all over the world know what a tremendous amount of work he put into the creation of the Act. In some ways, he is a remarkable model to new Members, such as myself, who are told when we come to the House of the dangers of not specialising.

On the other hand, it must be said that the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe and the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) are in danger of that other peril against which new Members are warned, which is taking one small corner of the whole fabric of society which—mixing my metaphors—could be a bottomless pit and insisting at every turn that all the resources available for the betterment of society should be directed to that corner.

I take issue with the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, because it is an old trick to try to differentiate between a good Minister and a bad Government. The Minister represents a Government under whom expenditure on the chronically sick and disabled has reached previously unknown heights and has grown in real terms by percentages of which any Government have a right to feel proud.

I accept that there are local authorities whose record in this, as in many other matters, leaves much to be desired, but I am nervous of the suggestion that central Government should dictate exactly how much should be spent or what resources should be involved in every individual case. The need to look wider than just one's own preoccupation does not belittle the importance of the disabled, but it is necessary to remember other needs.

My constituency spans two district councils. For the 10th year running, one of those councils has set its rate at the same level. As a consequence, in a pocket of high unemployment in a prosperous part of the country, unemployment is beginning to fall because employers are moving into the area, partly because the rate is not only stable, but is extraordinarily low. That is a social good which will have an impact on the disabled, as on other people.

Regrettably, I shall not be able to stay for much of the rest of the debate, because I have to go to the annual general meeting of the Community Service Volunteers, of which I have the honour to be a trustee. That organisation is relevant to the debate, because, among other pioneering efforts, it has pioneered the exciting experiment of independent living for the disabled, under which young volunteers live in the same house as severely disabled persons and help them to cope with the difficulties of their independence. I echo the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South when I say that the volunteers undoubtedly learn more than the disabled person about what is needed in the partnership.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Would my hon. Friend like to pay tribute to another aspect of community service volunteers' work? The able-to-help scheme allows disabled volunteers a chance to be the volunteers rather than the recipients of voluntary effort.

Mr. Rowe: I am of course delighted to pay tribute to that work. What is being done is a clear lesson that the disabled have as much to offer the able-bodied as the able-bodied have to offer the disabled. One of the essential features of this scheme is that local authorities need to respond to some of the difficulties with greater sophistication. I am sure the House knows that there was a tragic incident of a volunteer watching a disabled person die in peculiarly unhappy circumstances. The local authority, the volunteer and everyone involved was still so new to the scheme that they did not grasp some of the dangers in the experiment. It says a great deal for the maturity of the CSV and the local authority that the scheme did not die as a result of that unfortunate accident, but rather that lessons are being carefully applied to future efforts.

There is one minor but important point which I should like to raise with my hon. Friend the Minister. Although he has given the official reply, I hope that he will once again consider the matter. Let me cite the example of a couple in my constituency. The man is 100 per cent. disabled and his wife is unable to take any form of employment because she is caring for her husband. By frugal management she has managed to save some of the benefits which accrue to her family each week, and was looking to take out an insurance policy for the unhappy day, which is likely to come before her own death, when her husband dies. It transpires that, no matter where she turns or how she does it, the surrender value of any insurance policy that she takes out will be counted against her benefit entitlement.

Although I welcome the intention of the Green Paper to raise the disregard from £3,000 to £6,000, will my hon. Friend look again at those rare cases where there is 100 per cent. disability in the household and consider allowing some disregard on this so-called capital sum, which is a capital sum only in theory, especially if some form of caveat is entered against the possibility of borrowing against it.

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend courteously said that he might not be able to be here at the end of the debate, perhaps I might ask him whether his constituent is aware

of the current £1,500 exemption on the surrender value on life assurance policies, which is part of the present capital rules.

Mr. Rowe: I think that she is aware of it, but I cannot be absolutely sure. Even so, the impression was that it would not take very long to build up a policy entitlement which would overtake virtually all of the disregards. It seems hard that people who forswear present pleasure for future frugality should be penalised in this way.

It is important that resources be made available for the disabled. Without money, comparatively little can be done. However, it is erroneous to believe that only money is required. We need a change in the attitude of society. Perhaps I might give a small but pertinent example. It is strange how reluctant house builders are to consider the possibility of building the kind of home that they build for young couples, which incorporate features that would enable the homes to be used by the disabled. I do not believe that any young couple, glad to have their first home, would find slightly wider than average doors or electric sockets half way up the wall a major impediment to their happiness. It is much cheaper to build in the flexibility than to make modifications. Such a simple adaptation on the part of society would meet the needs of the disabled and others.

I strongly welcome the recently introduced extension of the joint financing arrangements, which will allow joint finance to continue for 13 years in some cases. Decanting disabled people into the community is an immensely important issue, but there is an evangelism about some of those who believe in getting rid of institutions. If we are not careful, we will find that people for whom the community is not ready and who find it impossible to adjust are put into the community. That does not diminish the enormous importance of taking those huge institutions, often of Victorian origin, and reallocating them in other ways to the benefit of the Health Service and social services, thus making it possible for the disabled to live within the community. The recently improved joint financing arrangements give tremendous help to that.

Another commercial. I have in my constituency the headquarters of only one national voluntary organisation. It is small but of fundamental importance and is called the Association of Carers. It has just received its first assistance from the Government. We welcome that. It is designed to make it easier for the army of men and women —mostly women—who have devoted their lives to the care of disabled or handicapped people, to articulate their needs and to describe the support that they require. Much of what they have to tell the Government has been greeted with considerable sympathy by my hon. Friend the Minister. There is a long way to go before the disabled receive the kind of dignified treatment which we would all like to see. The Government have nothing of which to be ashamed. They have made enormous advances, with the assistance of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, in the introduction of which the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe played an important part.

5.28 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I do not regard myself as a centrist but I shall not go as far as the forthright criticisms made by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and I go further than the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe).

I agree with the hon. Member for Mid-Kent that we must not enforce nationally what we cannot persuade people of the need to do locally. If we cannot persuade recalcitrant local authorities to spend on what we believe they should spend on, it is up to us and our colleagues locally to persuade people in the area that they should support expenditure on means of assisting disabled people. We must create a resonance locally rather than think that we can do things centrally by forcing action on local government.

I am sometimes anxious that, in debates on social services and social welfare, the Chamber is rather cosy. Those right hon. and hon. Members who attend are anxious about the disabled, and their attendance hides the fact that there are other hon. Members who are not as interested and who do not have the same determination to fight for the disabled.

It is a strange paradox that although the Minister can give global figures for expenditure and cite straightforward cash increases we all find that in practice many needs are not being met. Perhaps higher expectations and greater information about what should be available mean that these needs come to the fore more than in the past, but I hope that the Minister will examine the situation carefully and not hide behind national figures when hon. Members are being bombarded constantly with cases of apparently simple needs not being met at the local level.

In Thursday's debate on the problems of the elderly, I cited two cases of linkage which I regarded as unsatisfactory and in which I believed that better services could be provided without additional expenditure. One concerned the vast cost of wholesale slum clearance and rebuilding. The other concerned the interaction of the social services, social security, the voluntary organisations and the National Health Service to assist individuals. Today I shall give one instance in which linkage is not working as it should for the disabled.

I am concerned to find that in some instances non-teaching assistants provided in schools are being withdrawn or are not following through to assist young people who move on to other schools. It is hard to dispute the statements of local authorities about the limited resources currently available making it extremely difficult to continue providing extra services which in virtually every case we would all regard as valuable and necessary to enable disabled people to blossom to their full potential in the education environment.

I, too, wish to congratulate the right hon. Member for Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). I was not in the House in 1970, but I appreciate the problems that he must have faced and the last-minute fears that he must have felt about whether his Bill would finally become an Act. The right hon. Gentleman never misses an opportunity to put the case for the disabled and it is to his credit that he is not deterred by the risk of wearying people with a recital of the same facts and cases but ploughs on consistently.

The first election that I fought was for Leeds city council in 1968. Early on in my campaign I was brought starkly up against the problems of disabled people. As I canvassed in the streets of Leeds a message was brought to me asking me to call at a certain house to discuss the problems faced by a family with a mentally handicapped daughter. Without feeling that I was being particularly brave or deserving of credit, I duly called on the family and was horrified at the amazement of the parents when I did so. They told me that all too often the mention of

[Mr. Michael Meadowcroft]

mental handicap meant that no one turned up. That was an astonishing comment on the state of affairs in society at that time.

In the 15 years since the Act was passed, a great deal has been achieved in helping many disabled people to live almost completely normal lives in society simply because attention has been paid to providing greater access for them.

Another aspect of the Act which has not been fulfilled concerns the need for a better census by every local authority of the number of disabled people in its area. As far as I am aware, very few authorities carry out a proper census so they are unable properly to assess the provisions required. I cited the case of a rubella-affected child in Leeds who was very severely handicapped. She was deaf and blind and had a heart murmur. The authorities said that they would not provide a rubella unit because there were not enough rubella-affected children in the catchment area to justify such action. However, the parents of rubella-affected children in the area knew the precise numbers. On a certain day in Leeds the parents and the rubella-affected children all got together with the policy-makers from the local authority, both officers and councillors. As a result of that meeting, a rubella unit was built, attached to a school for people with hearing defects, and it has proved a great success. The census is a crucial tool if one is to make proper provision for disabled people.

I want to develop the whole problem of linkage and local authorities. One can place too much emphasis on the need to spend money. It is dangerous to make a statement like that in the House as it may be pounced on by the Minister and his colleagues as implying a need to spend less money or not to spend money where it is needed. I am not suggesting that. In many cases there is a need to provide cash to assist people. Sometimes, however, we do not look at a problem in the round to see how different Government Departments are affected and where their responsibilities lie.

The reduction or lack of expansion in home help services is not justifiable in financial terms. Looked at in the round, the lack of home help services probably causes greater expenditure elsewhere by accelerating the need for disabled people to be taken into institutional care. The home help service is one of the cheapest and most cost-effective services we have. The kind of people who are home helps, both male and female these days, are people who if they could afford not to be paid to do their work would willingly carry it out for nothing. I am sure many hon. Members have experienced, as I have, telephone calls to their homes at night and at weekends from home helps on behalf of their clients. They do this quite apart from their paid duties. It is a splendid service. I suspect that the home help service may thus even create a profit in sheer cash terms.

The way in which we help the unemployed through the Manpower Services Commission schemes is not cost effective and could be improved to the benefit of all concerned. I have previously mentioned the welfare maintenance and supply group in Bradford. That group of 12 disabled men met through the social contacts of disabled folk and found that they all had an interest in craft skills, so they decided to get together to make aids and adaptations for disabled people. They managed in the first year through the usual 100 per cent. MSC grant towards all the labour costs, but the MSC rules mean that no money can be kept by the project. That is crazy if one is trying to encourage people to be self-supporting.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) is not present as it would gladden her heart to hear that it was then suggested that the EEC would make funds available to carry the project on, the local authority bridging the gap between MSC and EEC funding. Paradoxically, despite being a larger organisation, the EEC is more flexible in giving grant to such projects and it was able to work in conjunction with the project, covering a declining percentage of the labour bill according to manufactured goods sold and the contracts for adaptations secured by the group.

As local council for voluntary service secretary, I thought that the group would probably survive with a grant of 40 per cent. of the wages bill, the rest being made up through the open market. In fact, the group is now working on a mere 20 per cent. subsidy. With that kind of flexibility, a 20 per cent. subsidy on the wage bill can enable 12 disabled people to fend for themselves and work in the community at a cost far less than that of having them unemployed and paying them 100 per cent. of all the multifarious benefits that the Minister has outlined today. These schemes have vision and if one considers the linkage between provisions they are both cost effective and beneficial to the individuals concerned.

There has been much criticism from various sources of the fact that, once held, international years are often forgotten, but such criticism is not always necessarily justified. When such a year works well and local committees are established, there is the possibilibity of continuing the momentum in beneficial ways. In the context of the International Year of Disabled People, many schemes were established—for example, access guides and information guides, which have since been updated —which have continued ever since. I am pleased that groups such as DIAL — Disabled Information Advice Line which was set up by disabled people for disabled people—have been able to maintain their funding. In many respects, the transportation side of the problem also burgeoned during that year.

I hate to say it, but it looks as though some of the community transport projects, such as dial-a-ride, will be hard hit as a result of the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties, because the money received from hiring charges was underpinned by grant aid from the transport bodies. It would be a shame if such projects were now to disappear.

It is important to look at the implications of grant aid. It should not be shuffled from one Government Department to another. As to ways of achieving innovation, I am well aware that some DHSS section 64 grants have been very much appreciated and have done a great deal to assist voluntary bodies to provide a different style and character of service than that provided by the state, whether centrally or locally. I am glad that there is an increased ministerial awareness of the need not to confine such grant aid to year-on-year funding.

Sometimes it is almost self-fulfilling for Ministers to say, "But you do not get the same kind of secure provision or calibre of staff," but by and large, we shall not get the present array of people working in such projects if there is merely year-on-year funding.

It is now apparent that there is greater awareness of the administrative implications of grant aid. In work for the

disabled and other work which qualifies for grant aid, it is often assumed that grant is simply given for a project, without realising the administrative implications. Some voluntary bodies have come unstuck through underfunding, even though it is only by a small proportion. However, such a proportion is crucial for a project even though it may not be for a statutory body.

We must also look carefully at what is now happening to urban aid grants through the Department of the Environment. I understand that in the main there is a virtual bar on new revenue money for projects, and for urban authorities such as Leeds and others in west Yorkshire, it will be difficult to maintain projects even at their present levels unless there is a change of heart about the amount of revenue finance to be made available.

The hon. Member for mid-Kent referred to the National Association of Carers. It has been estimated that if only 1 per cent. of families which now care for disabled or elderly persons refused to carry that burden and asked that their dependants be placed in residential care, the cost to the state would increase overnight by 20 per cent. I suspect that in some cases carers are literally being exploited. We must look carefully at support for such carers, not just in financial terms but also in terms of respite. If we do not do so, we may find that there will be a decrease in the number of those who are prepared to be carers, simply because they are incapable of doing so for any length of time.

It is desperately important that institutional care and care in the community are interlinked. However, I do not wish to anticipate the debate that I hope we shall have on the report of the Select Committee on Social Services. I notice that the hon. Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) is present, and I am sure he would agree that the Minister should be given no excuse whatever to deny a debate on those matters. However, it is important to take on board many of the provisions contained in the recent report on care in the community. During our visits here and in the United States, we were impressed by the fact that when a local authority or voluntary project said that a certain number of disabled people would always remain in institutional care, we always discovered that in other areas such disabled people were being cared for in the community. Given the right support, I do not believe that it is impossible to care for any group of people in the community. We must therefore look at ways and means of drawing the funding together.

It is important that disabled and handicapped persons come out of institutions with a cheque which would go either to the voluntary body or the local authority. Even with joint finance or other tapered methods of finance, I do not believe that organisations are prepared to take on such responsibilities unless they have an assurance of continued financial support. It is important that such money be given for the place, not just the person, since otherwise voluntary bodies with no great capital resources on which to fall back might experience severe cash flow problems if the disabled person died, as a result of which that finance ceased. I understand that in the north-west that type of dowry money is being used effectively to enable people to come out of the institutions.

Given the different disabilities for which people are taken into care and for which they need special attention, it is interesting that quite a number of those disabilities are preventable. For example, the fourth largest group of people needing special care contains those suffering from cardio-respiratory disorders. More than 10 per cent. of the total fall into that category. We must therefore look at preventive work such as that carried out on diet and nutritional food labelling rather than concentrating on treating people once they have become disabled.

Those of us who are fortunate to be able bodied must talk to our constituents whenever we can, even in the clubs and pubs, and should point out that people who are not as fortunate as ourselves must have the care to which they are entitled. One of the Minister's predecessors, the right hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice), told the Royal National Institute for the Blind in July 1979:

> "The disabled cannot expect to be exempted from the sacrifices necessary for economic recovery."

I reject that. People with needs that are perhaps more serious than the problems we face economically are entitled to be protected from the cold winds that may blow. It is incumbent on us all to ensure that such services are provided and that those in need are properly cared for so that they can live as full a life as possible. That will be of benefit not just to the disabled, but to the rest of us when we see them take their full place in society.

5.48 pm

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) made some of the points that I shall attempt to make, but perhaps I can approach them from another angle.

I begin by paying a tribute to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). I am sorry that he is not present, but he will do doubt read what I have said. I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his original Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act and also on initiating this debate on the 15th anniversary of that Act. It was on the right hon. Gentleman's first visit to India that he was informed that he had come first in the 1969 ballot for private Members' Bills.

At about that time the right hon. Gentleman and I were visiting the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Gandhi, as part of a group representing the Indian Spastics Society. We were lobbying the Indian Prime Minister to extend the special tax concessions available to voluntary organisations in India, which allow corporate donors to deduct more than 100 per cent. of the cost of a donation to certain research bodies in India. Tax concessions remain close to the heart of the right hon. Gentleman and myself in relation to what can be done for voluntary organisations in Britain. We are particularly worried about the problem of VAT and charities.

The Act has played a major role. Not only has it provided solid, practical help for thousands of disabled people and their families in the last 15 years, but it has significantly increased the public's awareness of disability. That is an important effect of the Act. It has been a beacon for many disabled people. As many hon. Members have said, it is regrettable that too many local authorities are still failing to carry out all their obligations under the Act.

All those right hon. and hon. Members to whom I wish to pay tribute seem to have left the Chamber. I was about to say something complimentary about my hon. Friend the Minister, but he too has left. His commitment is widely recognised. I have been aware of its since before I became a Member of the House.

I have had a long interest in the Act. I served on a group set up by the Royal Association for Disability and

[Mr. Tim Yeo]

Rehabilitation to examine the effects of the Act and to see whether it needed strengthening. We concluded that it needed strengthening three or four years ago. Voluntary organisations play an important role in monitoring the Act. They are useful watchdogs outside Parliament. They use their expertise to see whether it is effective in dealing with the problems in the way that was as originally intended.

The passing of the Act was not the end of the story. It was more of a foundation than a conclusion, and I should like to discuss the future. I do not want to discuss the social security Green Paper because we shall have ample opportunities to do that. I do not want to condemn that document before we have had a chance to examine it in detail.

There is much to be commended, particularly in relation to the principles, in the Green Paper. Everyone who has had to deal with the social security problems of the disabled and other claimants recognises the need to simplify the system. If we can direct a greater share of the social security budget to the most needy households, the Green Paper will serve a valuable purpose.

Hon. Members have accused local authorities of failing to carry out their obligations under the Act. Some local authorities claim that a lack of resources prevents them from carrying out their obligations. There can be no clearer reminder of the need to ensure that local authority money is spent wisely than the fact that it is not being spent on important services of the type required by this Act.

It is deplorable that ratepayers' money is being spent for political purposes such as publishing leaflets to promote anti-Government propaganda. Some local authorities refuse competitive tendering for their services at a cost to the ratepayers and to disabled people living in their areas.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): The hon. Gentleman has been active among disabled people, and I am surprised that he should accuse local authorities in that way. He is talking about minute amounts of money being spent on political propaganda when millions of pounds are needed to satisfy the Act introduced so well by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris). Surely the hon. Gentleman concedes that each time the Government cut the grant-related expenditure allocation to local authorities they make it more and more difficult for authorities to carry out their obligations under the Act. Some local authorities can carry out their obligations only by breaking the law.

Mr. Yeo: I do not want to mar our constructive and mainly bi-partisan debate by having a detailed argument with the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes). For whatever reason, local authorities have limited resources. That is inevitable. I want to ensure that those resources are used in the most effective way. Since one of the proper purposes for which those resources are needed is the relief of the problems of disability, it is a pity that some local authorities do not maximise their available resources.

The prevention of disability was referred to by the hon. Member for Leeds, West. The problem of prevention illustrates the difficulty of persuading local authorities and health authorities to carry out the wishes of central Government. Naturally, central Government are reluctant to dictate too minutely to local authorities about what they should do.

Before I worked for the Spastics Society, my predecessor Mr. James Loring launched the "save a baby" campaign, which was concerned with what the society described as the "priority of priorities"—the health of the future generation, and the need to ensure that as many babies as possible are born free of handicap and disability and are healthy.

Many aspects of prevention still merit attention. One aspect is the inadequacy of neonatal intensive care facilities. The provision of neonatal intensive care units remains below the level which even the DHSS acknowledges is required. That point was dealt with by the Social Services Select Committee in one of its early reports last year. It has been proven beyond doubt that the availability of neonatal intensive care facilities can save lives and enable healthy babies to be born, when the absence of such facilities would result in a handicapped baby being born. It is tragic that work by men such as Professor Osmond Reynolds cannot be duplicated throughout the country because of the absence of such facilities.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): As a member of the Social Security Select Committee, I confirm that what my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) says is true. However, does my hon. Friend recognise that under the guidance of our right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench considerable progress has been made and that the perinatal mortality rate has dropped to 10·3 per thousand, which is close to the best rates in Europe, and is improving?

Mr. Yeo: I rejoice with my hon. Friend at the fall in the perinatal mortality rate, which is a mark of the considerable progress here over the last five or six years. It is the result not only of efforts by voluntary organisations and the professional skill of the medics, but of the fact that the Government have been willing to acknowledge the problem and allocate the resources to deal with it. The progress shows that it is worth doing even more, because there is still potential for further improvement.

Antenatal care is another important aspect of prevention. The Spastics Society produced a film three years ago entitled, "A Question of Confidence", which emphasised the tremendous variation in the quality of antenatal provision throughout the country. It is clear that some antenatal care clinics provide facilities for other children to be looked after while mothers attend the clinic. The environment, transport facilities and all other services connected with the good clinics are attractive and welcoming. In contrast with clinics which provide good facilities and are conveniently located, there are clinics in which appointments are not easy to make, where there are long waits and where no facilities exist for mothers to attend with other children.

Women are positively deterred from early attendance at poor antenatal clinics, although it is clear that clinics can be of vital importance. I hope that the Minister will draw the attention of his colleagues at the Department of Health and Social Security to those points, and I am delighted to see the Under-Secretary at that Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) in attendance.

I have been disappointed with the reports of the maternity services advisory committee. They can be described as weak, in that they have resulted in virtually no action being taken. We now find that the committee itself has quietly been wound up, although it was to have been one of the major responses of the Department to the 1980 report of the Social Services Select Committee on perinatal and neonatal mortality.

Another aspect that must be stressed in connection with prevention is health education, by which I do not mean just sex education, but the whole question of teaching youngsters the importance of such issues as pre-conceptual care, of diet before pregnancy and of not smoking for those who are planning to have children. Those are all aspects which deserve greater attention than they now receive, and the way in which health education is put across in schools —I accept that it has received considerable attention recently—must be monitored carefully.

The prevention of handicap is vital. However, another aspect is preventing the ill effects of handicap. The hon. Member for Leeds, West referred to this when dealing wih short-term respite care, which is a vital service, as I know from the work that is carried out at the Tadworth court children's hospital, where I have the privilege of being chairman of trustees,. The service which that hospital provides is of the greatest possible value to families who care for chronically sick and disabled children for most of the year.

The relief provided by having their children in Tadworth for a week or two takes off the pressure, which can be considerable indeed when caring for children in those circumstances. Unfortunately, there is no clear statutory obligation on authorities to pay for that short-term respite care, although they have a statutory obligation to provide even residential education, if necessary in special schools, for handicapped children.

There is an obligation to provide residential accommodation for any child or adult where families are unable to cope. However, where families are trying to cope—and, in so doing, are relieving the state of a considerable financial burden—there is no obligation on any authority to pay for the respite care that may make that process possible.

The ultimate consequence of not providing such care would be to throw a greater burden on health or local authorities, and there could be further costs in connection with families which might break up through the pressures of looking after such children. Local authorities are reluctant to sponsor children unless they are compelled to do so. Although I cannot offer an easy solution to the problem, we must accept that it exists.

About two years ago a private Member's Bill was introduced with the aim of amending the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act. It was designed to be an anti-discrimination measure. I regret that the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) is not present for this debate, although he introduced that amending measure. It is a pity that his interest in the subject appears to be so short lived——

Mr. Boyes: Cheap.

Mr. Yeo: —in that he has not managed to be here on what is, after all, an Opposition day.

The Act tackles a number of the consequences of disability and, in the way in which it raises the public's consciousness of the subject, it has contributed to reducing the problem of discrimination against disabled people. Nevertheless, more needs to be done and it is worth recalling the detailed survey that was carried out by the Spastics Society in 1983, under the chairmanship of Mr. Ron Gerver, which came to the conclusion that discrimination against disabled people existed and that the one way to tackle it might be by legislation.

A great deal of discrimination results from ignorance or lack of thought on the part of people who have no first-hand experience of disability. However, there are more serious problems, particularly, for example, in employment. Applicants for jobs who acknowledge their disability at the time of applying find that their interview rate is substantially lower than those who make no reference to their disability. That is a sad but unfortunate truth.

On a less acute scale is the difficulty which, for example, spastic youngsters may encounter when getting served in pubs. Because of their physical disability, they are sometimes turned away because it is thought either that they will be unable to hold their drink in the way in which other youngsters can — a belief which is without foundation—or that the way in which they drink might deter other customers. I appreciate that discrimination of that sort is not easy to legislate on and that probably the educational process is the best way to put it right.

I welcome some of the imaginative educational advertising campaigns that have been launched, particularly the campaign which the Spastics Society has been running for some time, and I pay tribute to Mrs. Anita Monsell and Mr. Benjamin Bowles, who put together that campaign. There is, however, a role for legislation, too. A measure might be difficult to frame, and I accept that the amending Bill which was introduced in November 1983 was far from ideal. However, legislation could be part of the educational process, and the first step to putting matters right is to recognise the existence of discrimination.

I could not conclude my remarks without referring to the voluntary organisations. I pay tribute to the large number of outstanding voluntary bodies which are active in the field and I hope that their role can expand. Many of them contain a specialist expertise which can never be in the possession of statutory bodies. They are run by extremely committed people who offer outstanding value to the state in the work that they do, and I urge the Government to continue their programme, which is already encouraging, of exploring how voluntary organisations can be used to help implement policies such as care in the community.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West rightly referred to the funding problems of the various organisations. When the Government are assisting voluntary bodies with their funding, I hope that proper account will be taken of their administrative costs. Many schemes fall down because of lack of concentration on that aspect.

I welcome the debate and hope that the Minister will take careful note of the points that are being raised.

6.8 pm

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Hon. Members in all parts of the House know that I am disabled by deafness. I am grateful to your predecessor in the chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for assisting me. For about 20 minutes I was disabled by blindness, but your predecessor had the good

[Mr. Laurie Pavitt]

sense to have the blinds drawn. The sun was no longer in my eyes and I was able to see with clarity the handsome faces on the Conservative Benches.

I agree with the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) that this is, in the main, a consensus debate. However, I question his final remarks about voluntary bodies. In my constituency there are 44 marvellous organisations, including the Brent Association for the Disabled, which last year received £840,000 as a pump priming grant from the Greater London council. Although I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the important role that voluntary bodies play, unless central Government replace the finance that such bodies have in the past received, I fear that their voluntary work will come to an end.

I share the concern of the hon. Member for Suffolk, South in that while I, too, intended to speak about the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), the fact that they are both absent from the Chamber means that I must rely on the junior Minister and junior shadow Minister to convey to their superiors the essence of my remarks.

Today is a bit of a birthday for my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe. Those who piloted the Bill through in 1970 rejoiced that time had been found to pay tribute to his work. One of the key points of the Bill was that it co-ordinated the work of a number of different Departments under one Minister. Under the Labour Government, my right hon. Friend was the Minister with sole responsibility for disabled people.

I pay great tribute to the Minister for Social Security. He has the responsibility for disabled people as well as many other matters. The weakness in the present system is that there is still not only one Minister with responsibility for the disabled as provided for under the Act. Disablement is dealt with by many different Government Departments—Social Services, Transport, the Home Office and many others. All Departments have a responsibility towards the disabled and the chronically sick.

I have a profound regard for the Minister, but he has two responsibilities. I should be happy if the Minister were to be made Secretary of State or Minister for Health in the next Cabinet reshuffle. It would be a great improvement. Unfortunately, I am not at 10 Downing street to make that decision.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) commented on the Minister's speech. He said that he thought that it was a bad speech. I did not. The Minister made a good speech. He had the problem of having a dog's dinner wrapped up in green paper that he had to try to justify to the House. I thought that he made a good job of it.

The great thing about the Act was that it gave dignity and understanding to the disabled. It directed people's attention to them. On the last occasion upon which I had the privilege of speaking on health matters in the House, I referred to the National Health Service as being the jewel in the crown of the Labour party. It was, of course, associated with my right hon. Friend the late Nye Bevan. My right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe added a further jewel to that crown 20 years later. The Act will be his monument during his period in Parliament and for the rest of the century. The Act was, as a number of hon. Members have said, a landmark.

The chronically sick have not been mentioned much during the course of the debate. During the Bill's passage through the House the young chronically sick were of prime importance. Young people who were permanently disabled were in geriatric wards. They watched people in the surrounding beds dying. A geriatric ward for an active-minded, intelligent young person, merely because he or she was paraplegic, was a second disability that the House would not tolerate. It is one of the reasons why the House passed the Act.

That anxiety has not been followed up. It is the responsibility of district and regional health authorities to provide wards in which the young chronically sick can be separated from geriatrics. The Willesden general hospital has a young chronically sick ward. Even there, the original intention of separating the young chronically sick from the geriatrics has not worked, because Willesden general hospital is now a geriatric hospital. When I served on its committee, it was an acute hospital. It now has 16 beds for the young chronically sick, but its other 80 beds are occupied by the elderly. The whole purpose of that part of the Act was to put young people with other young people so that their youth did not stick out like a sore thumb among elderly people.

There are two pioneers in my area who are confined to wheelchairs. They are Nancy and Andrew Robertson, and they gave their name to the young people's ward at Willesden general hospital. It is called the Robertson ward. It was a tribute to the work that they had done with Disability Alliance and the many other organisations that helped to put the Act on the statute book.

Access has been mentioned by the Minister and other hon. Members. People like myself who are disabled by a hearing loss are entitled to access to the spoken word. The Act provides for that, but it does not happen everywhere. Access is provided in the Chamber. It has an electronic loop, which it took me eight years to persuade the authorities to install. Members who are hard of hearing need not listen acoustically; they can hear electronically, as I do. Unfortunately, one can only hear the main speaker and sometimes, especially at Question Time, interjections are far more interesting. The person listening electronically does not hear them. I am pleased to say that the House of Lords has a loop system. Black Rod consulted me, and now their Lordships do not need to wear a type of glorified telephone; they can also hear electronically.

I had the privilege of inaugurating the loop system at Leeds castle, in conjunction with Lord Geoffrey-Lloyd. Marks and Spencer has done a marvellous job in providing facilities from its foundation fund for churches and other public buildings, including Leeds castle. There is no point in people having access to a church if they cannot hear what is being said. There is no point in going to a cinema if the sound does not exist. The National Film Theatre fortunately has a loop, but no other London cinemas have. Three theatres have the system. I was able to persuade the Barbican to have a loop installed in its theatres.

That aspect of access has been neglected. Although the Act provides for it, local authorities do not regard it as a priority. One of the reasons is that a hearing disability is invisible. Everyone notices the paraplegic and the blind man with his stick, but those of us who are deaf find that not many people understand the problems involved.

The cost of the loop is negligible, but it makes a great deal of difference. The hard of hearing lose consonants. For example, someone might say, "Let's take a look." If I lose the consonants and am not wearing my two hearing aids that could be, "Let's rape the cook." There is no difference in the sound to a person who is hard of hearing. We have to be able to increase the clarity, not necessarily the volume.

There have been some advances since the Act came into force. There is now a new system to help the hard of hearing. It uses the infra-red ray. The Royal Festival hall has instituted that system. It is the only hall in the country that has it. The cost of such facilities for the hard of hearing is much less than the cost of ramps and a number of other things that are needed for wheelchairs. The cost of installing the loop system in the Chamber could be less than £1,000. Even at a time when there is a cash shortage, access for people who are hard of hearing should be provided as a priority by local authorities.

If hon. Members want to understand deafness, they should, if they have the chance, see the play "Children of a Lesser God", which has returned to London. It is a magnificent piece of dramatic art. The original actress in it was completely deaf, as is my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South. I am fortunate to have a residue of hearing. I can hear with two hearing aids. My right hon. Friend, who was only half as deaf as I am when he was first elected, unfortunately has no hearing at all. He has to rely upon a number of other aids. No disabled person wants pity. A number of hon. Members have said that we want equality. We do not want things done for us out of charity. We want them done as a result of decisions taken in the House and elsewhere, through participation. We do not want pity; we do not even want sympathy. We want understanding.

The best hearing aid ever walks on two legs—any member of the family or a friend of a deaf person. Pauline, the wife of my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, is a fantastic person. She has done outstanding work for the deaf as the chairman of the Royal National ear, nose and throat hospital. Her work surpasses all understanding of what can be done by a person who is fully involved. The family and friends of a deaf person must understand how important it is for them to talk clearly and distinctly and to make sure that they have communicated. That is the best hearing aid that a deaf person can have.

As I said earlier, the debate has been about the second jewel in Labour's crown, provided by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe. We still have a long way to go. I do not agree with the Minister that he cannot monitor the huge discrepancies in spending allocations by local authorities. My right hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent, South and for Wythenshawe gave figures showing that many local authorities are failing to meet their legal requirement under this Act to service the disabled.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wythenshawe, in his opening speech, mentioned several helpful books, but he did not mention his own book, "No Feet to Drag". The House gives my right hon. Friend credit for putting pressure on his own Government on these matters, just as much as he has with Conservative Governments. My right hon. Friend's book shows that those responsible for providing services for the disabled have failed in their duty, dragged their feet, and did not have sufficient understanding of the problems of those who are unable to do their own thing in their own time.

In 15 years' time, in the next century, when my right hon. Friend—like a Manny Shinwell—is sitting on the Front Bench of a Labour Government, I hope that the House will then have the sense to have another debate to mark the passing of 30 years since the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act received Royal Assent. It will be a permanent monument to him and to the Labour party.

6.22 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt), who has done so much on behalf of the chronic sick and disabled and has a long record in that respect which I could not hope to match.

The hon. Member and other hon. Members have referred to public attitudes. Whatever reservations the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) may have as to the extent to which his Act has been legally enforced, he can take a good deal of credit for the considerable change in public attitudes towards the disabled over the past 15 years. Not only is more provision now made for the disabled, but there is far greater understanding of and consideration for the disabled in many ways.

People now take it for granted that there may be a wheelchair going up and down the high street or moving in and out of the shops, and they make allowances for it. People understand the problems of the blind, whether or not they are accompanied by a guide dog. People realise how they can be helped.

The hon. Member for Brent, South was right to call attention to a group of the disabled whose problems are still not fully understood in the community, despite his work and that of the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) over so many years. Both of them have set a splendid example in showing how the profoundly deaf and the hard of hearing can play a full and active part in public life and in this House. As the hon. Gentleman said, part of the problem is that deafness is, as it were, an invisible disablement.

There have been some impressive technical developments which have done much for the deaf. There are far better and far more effective hearing aids available today than there were a few years ago. The introduction of Teletext on television has been an enormous boon for the hard of hearing and the deaf, who are now able to enjoy television to an extent that was never possible before.

The equipment used by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South to enable him to take part in our debates has been a great step forward and has enormous potential, but, as the hon. Member for Brent, South said, in the community generally it is still difficult for people to understand and appreciate properly the problems of the deaf. They have not yet the equivalent of the white stick by which the blind can make their disablement evident to those around them, although the introduction and spreading of the sympathetic hearing scheme is a step in the right direction.

People generally do not always know how to react to the deaf. As the hon. Gentleman said, it is important to understand their problem and to speak clearly to them. To use the title of the BBC's Ceefax magazine, when speaking to deaf people there is "no need to shout". The

[Mr. Roger Sims]

important thing is to speak clearly and slowly. From time to time I enjoy the intriguing experience of an animated conversation with the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South in the "silence room" of the Library of the House of Commons.

Deafness is a far more widespread disability than is generally appreciated. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South and the hon. Member for Brent, South are quite open about their disability and show how they can live with it. It is surprising that a number of hon. Members on each side of the House who suffer from a degree of deafness seem reluctant to make it evident and thereby enable others to help them.

One of the problems for those who suffer from some sort of physical disablement arises from ordinary everyday living conditions. They need housing accommodation that is suitable for their particular needs. They need accommodation that has been constructed or adapted to cope with their requirements. Local authorities and housing associations are active in building or adapting accommodation to suit the disabled. Wonderful work has been done in that respect by the Cheshire homes. There is a first-class scheme running in my own constituency at Wood Lodge, where a mini-village has been constructed, with conventional types of accommodation as well as houses and flats specially built for the disabled, so that they can feel very much a part of the community.

My Government's policy of restrictions on the extent to which local authorities could spend their capital receipts inevitably affected housing associations, and therefore restricted the amount of work that could be done for the disabled, but help to the disabled in their own homes may well be even better than moving them into special accommodation. Often the provision of relatively small items or adaptations can make a great deal of difference to their lives. Some criticism has been made of the extent to which local authorities help the disabled in that way, but my own local authority social service department has done much to provide small and relatively inexpensive aids to the disabled, such as an extra stair rail, special seating and frames in the lavatory, walking frames, zimmers and so on, all of which make life so much easier for the disabled. The voluntary organisations also do very good work in that area. The Red Cross organisation is always ready to help with equipment in an emergency. Voluntary organisations often have a specialist knowledge and expertise in their particular field which exceeds that of the local authority.

Recently I had the privilege of attending the annual general meeting of my local association for the care of those with spina bifida and hydrocephalus. One realises the particular difficulties with which the parents of children who suffer from these complaints must cope. Sometimes bureaucracy is unnecessarily harsh in allocating assistance for adaptations. Often a grant will be available, and, where that is not the case, some adaptations qualify for relief from VAT. That is right and desirable, but it is extraordinary that VAT relief is available for work done to help access to a property and for the provision or alteration of a bathroom, washroom or lavatory, but not if one wishes to build or adapt a bedroom for a disabled person.

The wife of one of my constituents is wholly incapable of walking, is confined to a wheelchair and cannot climb stairs. He is out at work during the day and, in any case, could not carry her up and down stairs night and day. For many years she has been living in a small dining room on the ground floor. To improve the quality of her life my constituent is having a purpose-built bedroom constructed as an extension to the ground floor. It will be a room with a wide entrance, a large window, a ramp and various fitments which a disabled person requires. According to the VAT regulations the only part of that work which is exempt from VAT is the ramp. If he was adapting a bathroom, washroom or lavatory, the entire work would be free of VAT, but because he is building a bedroom, he must pay VAT on virtually everything.

When I took the matter up with the Treasury, I was told that a line must be drawn somewhere, but it seems rather a harsh line, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minster, who has a particular interest in this area, will have a word with the Treasury to see whether we can get a more reasonable approach to the problem.

We have gone a long way in 15 years, although not as far as many people would like to go in terms of the application of the law and the public attitude. There is still plenty of scope for Government action, and the Minister has not been short of advice today. There is also scope for greater public understanding of the particular problems of the disabled. If today's debate has done something to increase public understanding, our time has been well spent.

6.32 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I am glad to be called to speak in this debate. I should like to echo the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friends to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) for his efforts over the years in this area and for initiating the debate this afternoon. Although some of us are comparatively new Members of Parliament, having come to the House in 1979, we have known, studied and followed his work and that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley).

I am the president of the disabled group in Ogmore, which has a comprehensive number of disabled people. Some of them suffer because they are legless, armless, or hard of hearing, but the majority suffer from pneumoconiosis, silicosis and other mining-related diseases. We respect them for the work that they and others have done over the years in Wales and other parts of the country, and we appreciate their problems and difficulties. My father was a miner in the Rhondda, and he worked for 35 years in Fernhill colliery. He was discharged with pneumoconiosis — 75 per cent. — but received little benefit from the coal owners at the time and the National Coal Board when it was formed.

I remember Friday 18 November 1983 when my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) introduced a private Member's Bill in the hope that Conservative Members would show compassion. A considerable number of hon. Members turned up, primarily to give the Bill a Second Reading. The Government promised to look seriously at the problem and hoped to be able to do something for us.

I wish to raise many matters on the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, and I appreciate that many hon. Members are aware of the time factor. I stress the importance of hospitalisation for people, especially as in Wales the vital care and nursing survices for chronically

sick, disabled and elderly patients is at stake. Decisions are being taken by the so-called managers of the Mid-Glamorgan health authority to close a hospital in the Blackmill area of Ogmore. For years the hospital has looked after the sick, the elderly and the disabled for short-stay periods, so that the children and, in some cases, the grandchildren can have a break from nursing them. Now that the hospital is to be closed, most of those elderly patients will have to find alternative nursing accommodation. That is precisely what the Government are doing in my constituency, in Wales, and, indeed, throughout the country. It is high time that there was either a change of attitude or of Government so that we can stop officials from reducing our health care facilities. The closure of the hospital is vigorously opposed by the people of Ogmore. Ten thousand names have been collected against the proposed closure. I am sure that with some persuasion the Secretary of State for Wales may agree to alter the decision.

When I meet the disabled in my group, they tell me of the personal and particular disadvantages to which they have been subjected since the Government came to office. Hon. Members do not need to go far to find how the disabled are suffering under the Government's policies. They need only go as far as the disabled in their constituencies. The Minister talked about the Green Paper, but the disabled people in my constituency cannot know about it because they cannot afford to buy the documents. Volume I costs £3, volume II cost £6·60, volume III costs £10·50, and the housing benefit review costs £6·10. That makes a total of £26, which is equal to the benefit on which some of them must live for a week. Therefore, when the Minister wonders why he has had no response from disabled and disadvantaged people about his proposals, I can tell him that it is because they cannot afford to buy the documents.

Mr. Alec Woodall (Hemsworth): Does my hon. Friend accept that every time the Government review allowances, whether for the disabled, the chronically sick or anyone else, the disabled are always the losers, as they will be under the new proposals? That was pointed out by Peter Large, vice-chairman of the Disablement Income Group, in a letter to *The Times* last Friday. They were the losers when the supplementary benefit scheme was supposed to be simplified in 1980, and again in 1984, when the available scale margin was increased from 50p to £1. The disabled were also disadvantaged when the heating allowances were extended.

Mr. Powell: I accept what my hon. Friend says. The Green Paper is a Government con trick. They justify their proposals on the basis of a con by the Minister who said that the proposals will mean a partnership between the individual and the state—a system built on twin pillars, as he calls it—better targeting, simplification and an improvement of the work incentive. In reality, the proposals mean a vastly reduced state provision, wholesale privatisation, more means testing, cuts, no flexibility, more cuts, stigmatisation for the unemployed, the active encouragement of low pay and yet more cuts. As my hon. Friend says, disabled people will be more disadvantaged than all the others.

I could have said much more, but I know that some of my hon. Friends wish to speak in the debate. The proposals in the Green Paper relating to the disabled and to the disadvantaged in society who receive social security benefits will undoubtedly be a complete failure — *[Interruption.]* I wish that the Minister would stop talking and listen for two minutes. It appears that he is not listening to the views of the Opposition.

As I said, many of those who would have wished to contribute to the debate on the Green Paper and other documents will be unable to do so because they cannot afford them, but those of us who have seen the documents wish to tell the Minister a few things. The Green Paper fails completely to address itself to the problems of the present social security system. Its proposals will further erode the principle of social insurance, extend the stigma of the means tests, and remove the security of protection against poverty for millions of our people.

The Government should review the system so that disabled groups can be provided with a breakdown of the proposals. One cannot expect disabled people to digest all the information, let alone to pay for it. Indeed, even if they could afford it, it would cause them indigestion. We want something different. We want the Minister to listen to disabled people and to propose something entirely different from the Green Paper.

6.43 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I shall not mention the new social security review because enough has been said about it today. I have not been convinced by the Government's explanation of the proposals. The Minister and other Conservative Members have talked about fairer distribution, but I am dying to know what amount of money the Government hope to save by the review. However, I shall have to wait to see what happens.

We are talking about the 15th anniversary of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on the way in which he worked all those years ago to put this measure on the statute book. There is no doubt that it was a step in the right direction.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), I had many years' experience of the mining industry and I realise the disablement that can result from such employment. I was one of the lucky ones, because I spent 40 years in the industry and was unaffected. I feel extremely sorry for those who have been affected and whom we try to help as much as we can. The nearest that I have been to their experience was spending a day in a wheelchair to find out how the disabled cope with their problems. I discovered some amazing problems. I tried to enter the public library, but discovered that the door was not wide enough for the wheelchair. I had great difficulty in squeezing into a lift so that I could get upstairs to where the books were. I could not reach the top two shelves. It showed me that we are falling down on the job of providing facilities for disabled people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore mentioned pneumoconiosis, which is an extremely serious problem. I have seen people fighting for breath as a result of contracting the disease from working in the pits. They are sent by their general practitioners to see the local consultant, who does a series of tests. The results of those tests are then sent to the regional health authority, where the decision about the percentage of coal dust in the lungs is made. Many of those people are told that their disablement is not severe enough to warrant the payment

[Mr. Frank Haynes]

of benefit. However, it grieves and sickens me that, when many of them have died and post-mortems are carried out, more often than not it is discovered that they were 45, 50 or 60 per cent. pneumoconiotic. Yet they were turned down by those whizz kids in the regional health authority. The Government must examine the matter, because such people should receive the benefits to which they are entitled but which they are being denied. That is one matter that worries me when I consider the new review. How many more people will be affected in the way that I have suggested?

There are many accidents in the mining industry. We have a system of rehabilitation, but what happens? The Government put on the clamps and tell the regional health authorities that less money will be allocated next year. That has happened in the Trent region, with the result that it wishes to close a rehabilitation centre that is doing a marvellous job. The fabulous service that it can provide helps to get men back to work more quickly.

The Minister talked about local authority overspending. Ashfield district council has been fair, and has tried to provide for the disabled as much accommodation as it can afford. However, because of Government cuts, it cannot provide enough suitable accommodation, which means that many disabled people must continue to struggle up and down stairs in their old homes.

There are terrible problems, which I hope the Minister appreciates. However, I doubt whether there will be action. There will be no action until we get rid of the Government. We should spend more money on the disabled. For two years, I have been asking the Government to do something about the provision of hearing aids. The previous Minister for Social Security took no action, but I hope that this Minister will do something. In my area, people must wait 18 months for hearing aids. However, 14½ miles away in Nottingham, the wait is between four and six months. That is unclear. Let us have a balancing up and some money put into ensuring the proper provision of hearing aids. After all, deaf people are disabled and should be looked after properly. They have made their contributions, as many are elderly people, and they need such aids to be able to hear what is going on. Travelling expenses should also be given to those who have to travel to Nottingham.

While I was in that wheelchair, I found kerbs too high and doors that I could not get through. I could not get upstairs. We have to examine the problem properly. We have skated over it far too often and for far too long, but the Act is on the statute book. We have to make it work in the interests of disabled people so that they may enjoy a better life.

6.50 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt) said that disabled people wanted neither pity nor sympathy, but opportunity and equality, and one opportunity that they want is the right to work. The Tomlinson report, as long ago as 1943, said that the aim should be to secure for the disabled people their full share within their capacity of such employment as was ordinarily available. It asked for the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act and suggested that employers with 20 or more employees should have at least 3 per cent. of their work force as disabled people.

Despite that report, only 30 per cent. of companies, according to the latest figures, meet the 3 per cent. quota. That figure was given in *Hansard* on 21 November 1984. On the other hand, there is strong all-party support for a quota system, shown in a report in *New Society* on 1 January 1981. Conservatives voted 66 per cent., Labour Members 72 per cent., Liberals 74 per cent. and others 61 per cent.—69 per cent. overall—in favour of the quota system being strengthened.

I hope that the Minister will say something about incentives to register. It is interesting to note that local authorities had an increase in the number of people registered because they get a benefit from so doing. I accept that the number of people wanting to work appears to be reducing dramatically, because there is no incentive to register as such people cannot get a job. I suggest that the Minister looks at his own house. The latest figures for Departments show that only five of the 44 fulfil the quota. In the Department of Health and Social Security, which should be particularly aware of this problem, only 1·5 per cent. of the staff are disabled. We should be asking companies, both private and public sector, to take their quota, and the Government should be setting an example.

6.53 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris: There is no time for me to reply to the debate from this Dispatch Box. I count it more important that the Minister should have some time to reply, and I have been concerned to assist as many other hon. Members as possible to take part in the debate. I have three very brief points to make.

First, as the Minister will know, the Royal National Institute for the Blind published on 3 June an important report on "Local Authority Social Rehabilitation Services to Visually Handicapped People". It is a disturbing document, which says;

> "Local Authority Social Services departments' provisions for newly-blind people are inadequate, widely variable and likely to deteriorate further."

I should be grateful if the Minister would respond to that statement in the short time available to him.

Secondly, the timing of the debate made it impossible for my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) and the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) to be with us today. I am sure that the House will understand their problem and will very much have missed the contributions they would have made to the debate. Thirdly, I hope that the Minister will deal with more of the questions raised with him in the debate than he has so far been able to do.

I am grateful for the kindness shown to me by so many of my colleagues — indeed by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House—who have spoken in the debate.

6.54 pm

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) will realise that I am also under some pressure about the number of points that I can make. Not quite so many kind words have been said about me as about the right hon. Gentleman, but I am told that my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) was quite nice about me, as was the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt). I am only sorry to have missed the rare privilege of compliments to a Minister.

I acknowledge the strictures on the social security review made by the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr.

Powell). However, I cannot immediately think of any significant way in which the social insurance principle is altered by the way that the provisions of the review affect disabled people. What has been the subject of debate today has nothing to do with social insurance benefits. We are concerned with the income-related or means-tested benefit, which is undoubtedly of great significance to disabled people, as has been acknowledged.

A number of organisations gave oral and written evidence to the review. In view of the strength with which the hon. Member for Ogmore put his remarks, I point out that I went out of my way to arrange for the Wales Council for the Disabled, which was not able to come to a public hearing, to come to see me personally at Alexander Fleming house to put its views. I was glad to be able to do that.

I remain convinced that our proposals, which I described at some length earlier, provide a clearer, more comprehensible system of assistance to disabled people in the income-related sector. It will be fairer across the range of disabled people who depend upon income support. To pick up what the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) said, for those two reasons and especially because of the former, benefits are likely to be much more effectively taken up by those at whom they are directed, than with the present confusing and complicated system.

Earlier, when I spoke of the advantages of the proposed new structure, I said that our intention was for the disablement premium to be paid where the claimant's partner, as distinct from the claimant, was either in receipt of certain benefits or simply certified as having been incapable of work for 28 weeks or more. I said that we would wish this last qualification — simply being incapable of work for 28 weeks even if no incapacity benefit was payable to form a passport — would also apply to the partners of claimants.

So as to avoid misleading anyone, I should acknowledge that this intention presents some practical problems, as in many cases the partner will not normally be in the employment sector. I cannot be absolutely sure that we shall be able to overcome this problem, but we shall certainly seek to do so, and in many cases the equal treatment rules that allow partners to decide which of them will be the claimant will probably provide an appropriate answer. I wish to show knowledgeable people outside that there is a practical problem.

I attach importance to the problems of deaf people, a point raised both by the hon. Member or Brent South, with his well-known knowledge of, and interest in, this sector, and by my hon. Friend the Member for Chiselhurst (Mr. Sims). The problems of deaf people demand more of our attention. I have formed that impression in the period over which I have been Minister with responsibility for the disabled, and we shall seek to reflect that in developing our policies.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe spoke about the RNIB and its survey. It will be within his knowledge that the Department has been carrying out work to discover more up-to-date information about the services provided by local authority social services departments to the blind. We have not yet managed to complete collating all that information, but it will be used as a basis for discussion with bodies outside, including the RNIB, to see what action might be appropiate to bring about any improvements that are shown to be needed.

I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South about the need for prevention. He will be aware both of the present rubella campaign and of the Asian mother and baby campaign. These are two significant initiatives directed at prevention with which my hon. Friend is associated. I thought that he was a little hard in his words about the maternity services advisory committee. In general, its reports are felt to have been very useful exercises. They have been sent to all health authorities, with the committee's own check list of action, and the Government have made it clear that they hope that health authorities will pick up the suggestions made by the committee.

Finally, in this brief canter round the field, I must pay tribute to the work of the voluntary organisations. This matter was touched upon by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) and a number of others——

It being Seven o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed without Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 6(2)(c).

Orders of the Day

Food and Environment Protection Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

ENFORCEMENT OF CONVENTIONS

'(1) The Ministers may jointly by order made by statutory instrument—

(a) declare that any procedure which has been developed for the effective application of the London Convention or the Oslo Convention and is specified in the order is an agreed procedure as between Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the Government of any Convention State so specified; and

(b) specify any of the powers conferred by this Act for the purpose of enforcing this Part of this Act as a power that may be exercised, by such persons in such circumstances and subject to such conditions or modifications as may be specified, for the purpose of enforcing that procedure.

(2) A person who exercises any powers by virtue of an order under this section shall have the same rights and liabilities in relation to their exercise that a person authorised under section 11 above would have in relation to the exercise of any powers for the purpose of enforcing this Part of this Act.

(3) A statutory instrument containing an order under this section shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.—*[Mr. MacGregor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7.1 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move, That the clause be read a second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this motion, we may discuss Government amendment No. 50.

Mr. MacGregor: In Committee, amendments were tabled by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) which would have re-enacted section 6 of the Dumping at Sea Act 1974. That section enables Ministers to make orders putting into effect any co-operative procedures between contracting parties to the London and Oslo conventions for enforcement of those conventions on the high seas. Since no such arrangements had been made since 1974, or seemed likely to be made, the provision was not included in the Bill because it seemed to be unnecessary. However, the hon. Member for Pontypridd argued in Committee — really in response to an invitation from me—that if the situation ever arose, he would prefer to see statutory provision that anticipated the likelihood of any arrangements of this kind so that it would not be necessary to have emergency or primary legislative provisions. I said that I had no strong feelings either way, but that, in the light of the hon. Gentleman's arguments, I was happy to concur.

The new clause meets that commitment, although the drafting is considerably changed from the 1974 Act both to fit in with the other provisions of the Bill and to make a number of technical changes and improvements. It gives us all the powers that we think might be needed in the event of enforcement procedures being agreed.

Government amendment No. 50 is consequential on the new clause on enforcement of the conventions. It excludes the Northern Ireland Office from making an order under the new clause. The clause concerns enforcement of the conventions outside United Kingdom territorial waters, and such matters are outside the jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland Office. Any orders made under the new clause would be made by the Minister and the Secretary of State.

It might be helpful if I added some further explanation. Both the conventions contain an agreement to co-operate in developing enforcement procedures, in particular on the high seas. Any orders made under this clause would specify the convention state or states with which we had agreed such procedures, and may confer on officers of such states any of the powers which British officers have for the purposes of enforcing part II of the Bill, with or without any modifications. Officers of the specified convention states could be empowered to enter British vessels on the high seas if they suspected there were substances or articles to be deposited on board. British officers' powers may be extended so that they could enter vessels of specified convention states on the high seas. British officers may enter any vessel inside United Kingdom waters under powers conferred in the Bill. It is not intended that any officers would be given powers of entry within another country's territorial waters. This will be made clear in the order.

All officers acting under the order would have the same rights and liabilities as British officers enforcing part II of the Bill—for example, they must be issued with, and must produce, evidence of their authority; they must carry out their functions at a reasonable hour; and they have the same protection from prosecution.

I spell this out only for the convenience of the House, because the issue may be academic. However, it is useful to add this provision to the Bill and to have powers to act for any such eventuality.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): The Opposition welcome the new clause and the subsequent consequential amendment. We are grateful for the way in which the Minister has taken on board what my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) said so eloquently both on Second Reading and in detail in Committee. It has allowed us to adopt a bi-partisan approach to this aspect of the Bill.

The clause replaces in statute form section 6(1) of the Dumping at Sea Act. It appeared that the Bill repealed completely the Dumping at Sea Act, and the Opposition felt that by including a provision along the lines of the new clause people would be reassured that, although the Act was being repealed, we were in no way weakening it.

The whole House believes that we should not weaken our commitment to the principles of the Dumping at Sea Act, and there is considerable evidence to suggest that we should look closer at ways of developing the provisions of the Act to try to ensure that the seas that surround us, especially the North sea, are protected from the cumulative effects of pollution.

The Opposition regard section 6 of the Dumping at Sea Act as important. As the Minister explained, it was essentially an enabling provision. It permitted Her Majesty's Government to introduce agreements made under the conventions and to carry them forward into legislation by means of a statutory instrument. We have

felt that that was very much preferable to emergency or primary legislation. We have seen again and again how Governments have difficulties in providing time for the consideration of primary legislation, as the Minister knows from his experience of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and primary legislation enacting the Government's environmental policies as they affect agriculture.

As I understand it, the Government originally omitted the clause on the logic that, because it had not been used for the past 11 years or so, it would perhaps never be used. History may be used to judge what is likely to happen in the future, but on this occasion, I think that that was a false judgment. It may be that events are taking place which will result in agreements under the conventions, and we may wish to incorporate those into British law. I say that because the House knows of the growing unrest about the amount of pollution being unloaded into our seas, the North sea especially.

Our concern is justified because much pollution is cumulative. With modern science and technology, it means not only that the type of pollution is more complicated, but that our methods of testing are more complicated and sophisticated. Therefore, we are able to judge the effect of increasing dumping in the sea and, from that effect, we can make a judgement about the damage that it will cause to the marine environment or to the human environment which may depend on the seas. That was outlined clearly in the 10th report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution. It drew attention to this problem, especially in the North sea.

The Government take a rather relaxed attitude—I do not say a non-vigilant attitude—about the North sea. With our fast rivers running into the sea and because of our topography, we tend to see the seas differently from our neighbours. Although Her Majesty's Government's attitude may be relaxed, that is not the view of many of our neighbours. Recently, the Dutch Minister of Transport described the North sea as

"the dustbin of the coastal straits."

There is no doubt that Britain is probably the worst polluter of the North sea.

The clause would allow the encouragement of a convention agreement. As the Minister knows, there was a very important conference in Bremen in November 1984 when these problems of pollution and related aspects were discussed. Britain was somewhat isolated at the conference. One result is that, at the Government's invitation, a second conference is to be held in London towards the end of 1986. I hope that the Government will push for a joint agreement under the convention, which may call for legislation under this clause. Between now and 1986 the Council of Europe municipalities working group on marine pollution is to hold a major international conference under the auspices of the Tyne and Wear county council in the north-east of England. Some of the ground work to be carried out at that conference will be useful to the conference to be held in London in 1986.

We have argued all along for the inclusion of this clause, for two reasons. First, it would reassure people that, although we were repealing the Dumping at Sea Act 1974, we were not throwing away any of its principles. Secondly, we welcome it because we believe that there are great advantages in having enabling legislation of this kind, especially when we are dealing with an area where there is movement and a great deal of discussion and where I hope that before too long there will be international agreement. We very much welcome the Government's flexibility on this point and the new clause.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 2

CODES OF PRACTICE

"(1) The Ministers may from time to time after consultation with such persons or bodies as seem to them representative of the interests concerned—

(a) prepare and issue codes of practice for the purpose of providing practical guidance in respect of any provision of this Part of this Act or of regulations; and

(b) revise any such code by revoking, varying, amending or adding to the provisions of the code.

(2) A code prepared in pursuance of this section and any alterations proposed to be made on a revision of such a code shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament, and the Ministers shall not issue the code or revised code, as the case may be, until after the end of the period of 40 days beginning with the day on which the code or the proposed alterations were so laid.

(3) If, within the period mentioned in subsection (2) above, either House resolves that the code be not issued, or the proposed alterations be not made, as the case may be, the Ministers shall not issue the code or revised code (without prejudice to their powers under that subsection to lay further codes or proposed alterations before Parliament).

(4) For the purposes of subsection (2) above—

(a) where a code or proposed alterations are laid before each House of Parliament on different days, the later day shall be taken to be the day on which the code or the proposed alterations, as the case may be, were laid before both Houses; and

(b) in reckoning any period of 40 days, no account shall be taken of any time during which Parliament is dissolved or prorogued or during which both Houses are adjourned for more than four days.

(5) The Ministers shall cause any code issued or revised under this section to be printed and distributed, and may make such arrangements as they think fit for its distribution, including causing copies of it to be put on sale to the public at such reasonable price as the Ministers may determine.

(6) A failure on the part of any person to follow any guidance contained in a code issued under this section shall not of itself render that person liable to proceedings of any kind.

(7) In all criminal proceedings any such code shall be admissible in evidence; and if any provision of such a code appears to the court conducting the proceedings to be relevant to any question arising in the proceedings, it shall be taken into account in determining that question."—*[Mr. John.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7.15 pm

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 47, 48, 49 and 51.

Mr. John: Normally it is with tongue in cheek that we speak about improving a Bill in Committee because we do our damnedest either to get our point of view accepted or to wreck the principle. The new clause is an example of the way in which we have succeeded in clarifying our minds about the contents of the Bill. The addition of the clause will improve the Bill.

The clause provides the codes of practice with a statutory base. The Government's proposal was that the codes of conduct should not necessarily be given statutory force, but in Committee and again tonight our view is that the codes of practice should be given statutory force. I hope that this proposal will be supported by the

[Mr. John]

Government. Having got the principle right, I messed up the consequentials and the Government have kindly tabled a number of consequential amendments which put the matter right.

The Bill provides a statutory basis and allows the House to pray against codes of practice which may be deemed to be harmful. There is procedure for dealing with such a prayer. Subsection (5) deals with the distribution of the codes of practice to those who use or who are likely to use them. I shall deal with that point later.

It is important that these codes of practice should be made known to those branches of industry which are likely to use them. I hope that the Government will announce the steps that they will take to ensure that the codes of practice are widely disseminated. They ought to be made available either free or at a nominal cost to farmers and to others who may be expected to use them in order that they may be widely known and observed. That is the object of providing codes of conduct of this kind.

Nobody disputes that pesticides are highly toxic chemicals. They have to be used, but they must be used properly because of their toxicity. We must weigh both the benefits to be derived from them and the risks involved in using them. The benefits are obvious. They have led to increased food production and to a reasonably uninfected environment. Nevertheless, we must weigh up the risks both to the users of the pesticides and also to those who live in the vicinity—the people who may be either directly or indirectly affected by the vaporisation of the pesticides.

Pesticide residues can affect the consumer if harvest intervals are not observed or if the pesticide residues that are to be found in the food chain are too high and therefore dangerous to the consumer. We must also consider the effect upon wildlife and the environment of the use of pesticides and their allied products because of the damage which in the past has unwittingly and innocently been caused by all of us. We do not wish to inflict further damage in the future.

On the effect of organochlorines, I read in the newspapers last week that some people allege that certain of the DDT derivatives are still being used in this country. One wonders how the people who use them can be so heedless of their health and about the damage that they are causing to the environment. Wildlife has been endangered by the use of pesticides. We have to guard against a number of dangers in the codes of practice.

We pride ourselves upon the fact that we are now fairly conversant with the dangers of pesticides but we are not yet aware of all the dangers, certainly not of the long-term dangers. Some of the risks are not yet known and will probably not be known for decades to come. Therefore we should always err on the side of safety and consider not how narrow but how wide is the use of pesticides or pesticide-like substances. They are used not only for the production of food but for the storage of food.

Pesticides will probably be used for the storage of food for a very long time. I understand that last week a committee dealt with irradiation and expressed fears about it. Pesticides and herbicides are used in ever-increasing quantities in our houses and gardens. In percentage terms, this is probably a major growth industry. Pesticides and herbicides are excellent when they are used according to the regulations. It is vital that they should be stored and used properly because they can be lethal to pets and children.

Most members of the public do not appreciate that pesticides and herbicides are used by local authorities in public parks and on roadside verges. It is important for those who use herbicides in parks, and for those who use those recreational areas, that such substances should be used properly and that there should be a code of practice, which is observed, thus ensuring some safety.

Domestic pests and timber control is one of the most neglected aspects. Indeed, it was neglected during the debate in the other place, and the situation was remedied only in Committee, when there was a thorough discussion of the issue. Given the confined spaces involved and the highly toxic substances used in pest control and timber treatment in the home, it is highly desirable that there should be a code of practice. Furthermore, I believe that codes of practice should be sent to those involved. However, to ensure proper observation we need a fairly stable timber treatment industry so that the means of control and treatment do not vary dramatically from year to year.

In Committee, I produced statistics showing that, according to the Yellow Pages, firms were going in and out of existence with alarming frequency. Such short-lived organisations must involve a cowboy element, and thus are not the experts that they hold themselves out to be. Consequently, it is important that some safeguards should be provided through a code of practice. The registration of such organisations should also be considered where they contract out and hold themselves out as being experts.

Industrial pest control in factories, hospitals, restaurants and so on is a highly sensitive matter for the many people who work in them. In Committee we had a long discussion—it seemed long, but perhaps it was just a short interchange — about whether compulsion and persuasion were mutually exclusive. As hon. Members will see from the new clause, failure to follow any guidance is not made a criminal offence. However, any such code of practice will be admissible in evidence during any future prosecution. That strikes a balance. We all hope that the codes of practice will persuade people to pursue decent practices both indoors and outdoors for their safety and that of others. However, if they do not do so, there should be some sanction to prevent them from carrying on.

The problems are different in the various areas that I have already outlined. For example, different problems arise in respect of parks, the treatment of timber in domestic houses and industrial pest control. Consequently, there should be a separate code of practice dealing with each major sector so that, to quote the Secretary of State for Social Services, we can have codes of practice that are targeted on the particular evil that we want to avoid and on the areas that we want to govern. In particular, I hope that aerial spraying will be dealt with in that way. Despite all the debates and assurances, I am still unhappy about the interest of the Civil Aviation Authority in the aerial spraying debate. I should be ruled out of order if I dwelt on that now, but I should like to record my general unhappiness, and my belief that a code of practice on aerial spraying would have a definite effect.

But the main code of practice should deal with the training of those using pesticides. The 1976 ADAS report has been quoted, and it showed that 40 per cent. of those using pesticides on farms had received some training. The

conclusion was that 60 per cent. had received none. The British Agrochemicals Association talked about the mismatch of a high technology means of application and the largely unskilled operators of such highly technical, increasingly complex machinery. We know that the agricultural training board has the means and courses to offer to such people, but they are very much under-subscribed. The reason may be a matter for debate, but the fact that they are under-subscribed is undeniable and is a cause for concern to us all.

As agriculture is an industry whose machinery is becoming ever more complex, people should be trained in its use and application both for their protection and to ensure the proper application of pesticides. Therefore, some form of certification might be considered. The training of employees in wood preservation is also essential, because some of the substances used are particularly toxic. However, that is only likely to happen in a stable industry and that, in turn, depends on registration.

Enforcement is perhaps the one matter that is not dealt with in the new clause and that may be the subject of criticism. I deliberately did not include it because it is a matter of fact rather than of legislative provision. But in the past three years the farm inspectorate's establishment is reported to have fallen from 179 to 151. Even with the 12 people allocated to the inspectorate for the purposes of the Bill, there will still be fewer inspectors dealing with agriculture than three years ago. Moreover, they will be dealing with a far wider range of issues because of the legislative burden that the Bill imposes on them.

There was a difference of opinion as to whether the farm inspector would interrupt someone's breakfast every fortnight or every five or six years. It was rare for us to disagree in Committee, but when we did so, we did not do so by halves. There was a considerable difference in the estimates as to how often the inspector would make a routine visit. However, I stick by my estimate that the visit is likely to be every five or six years. If that is so, the enforcement that is necessary as a backup to persuasion is not likely to be very effective. Perhaps I am ending on a rather negative note——

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): If inspections took place more regularly, perhaps every two to three years, how many people would have to be employed?

Mr. John: More. Obviously, I cannot give a precise answer, but we are placing more duties on fewer people and, therefore, we must be over-stretching them. I hope that hon. Members will be conscious of that fact. Indeed, that is why the codes of practice are important and should be statutory. Much enforcement could be avoided if we could get an acceptance within all branches of the industry that codes of practice should be followed in their own interests, and those of others.

We would then not need to be so worried about enforcement, but that will depend on what the Government do to disseminate the information and to make it relatively cheap. Expensive booklets tend to be remaindered and I do not know of a remainder bookstore run by ADAS.

To avoid ending on a negative note, I should say that a statutory system, with properly enforced and regulated codes of practice, could be of immense benefit in dealing with highly toxic substances. I believe that the new clause will bring great benefits and I thank the Government for their assistance in the matter. We have been at one on the principle and I hope that the House will ensure that we are also at one in practice.

7.30 pm

Miss Joan Maynard (Sheffield, Brightside): I welcome the new clause and I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) that it is important that there should be adequate enforcement of the codes of practice. That will require an adequate number of inspectors which will obviously cost more, but when people's health is at stake, we should not be deterred by costs.

Because of the great dangers of pesticides and the new methods of farming, we need rigorous control over these dangerous, toxic substances. I think first of those who work in agriculture, forestry and horticulture, but consumers and wildlife are also affected. This is a matter of tremendous importance.

The vast majority of pesticide users are the workers in the industry and there is no statutory provision for paid time off work for training. Because of the dangers of many of the toxic substances, employees should be properly trained in their use and should be given paid time off work to receive that training. There should be statutory provision for such time off for all employees required to use or handle the pesticides. There should be no difficulty about that, because the training could be done through the agricultural training colleges, the industry's training board, the national proficiency test council, the TUC or the appropriate trade union. However, the training should not be organised by the pesticide manufacturers who have a vested interest in the matter.

Proper training is missing from new clause 2. I am glad that the new clause has been tabled, but I feel strongly that workers should be given proper training before using dangerous toxic substances.

Mr. John Carlisle: The hon. Lady suggested, perhaps inadvertently, that training should not be given by manufacturers. However, manufacturers already do a tremendous amount of training and are very concerned about the training of operators. I would not want the House to get the impression that that valuable work in research and development and in the training of operators has not been recognised.

Miss Maynard: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate my nervousness about training by manufacturers. He cannot deny that they have a vested interest in the sale of chemicals and I should be happier if the training were organised through the agricultural training board or the agricultural institutes. They are more likely to give adequate and proper training.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): On behalf of the alliance parties, I welcome the Government's agreement to include new clauses 1 and 2 in the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells), who served on the Committee, has asked me to say how glad he is that the Government have made so many amendments to the Bill. He thought that the Committee was one of the most constructive on which he had ever served.

I agree with the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) that codes of practice are necessary. The hon. Gentleman said that he hoped that they would be fairly

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

cheap, if not free. I have with me a guide to the Poisonous Substances in Agriculture Regulations 1984, which retails at £4·20. I hope that the codes of practice will be cheaper.

No doubt the guide should be read carefully by farmers throughout the country, but I doubt whether many will read all 50-odd pages and whether many copies of the guide will be found on our farms. Section IV of the guide includes the only recommendation about the protection of the public in the use of poisonous substances. It says:

"Do not spray in unsuitable conditions because of the danger of spray drift, or in hot still weather, as unpredictable vapour drift may occur."

It says that the safest condition may be checked with a simple anemometer. I have been on many farms in my constituency and elsewhere and have seen much equipment lying in corners, but I have yet to see even one anemometer. I suspect that there are few in Britain. The guide explains how the safest condition may be checked without an anemometer and adds:

"Advance warning will allow neighbouring farmers and bee-keepers to protect livestock and honey-bees. Warning occupiers of adjacent domestic premises will also allow them, their children, pets and personal items which may become soiled or contaminated, to be safeguarded."

That is all good stuff and it would, indeed, be nice to warn neighbours, but there is no obligation to do so. However, the provision of such information in a simpler, more readily available form would be a welcome addition to the Bill.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Peggy Fenner): I am happy to accept the new clause, which was drafted by parliamentary counsel in response to an initiative of the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) in Committee. I believe that it will be a useful addition to the Bill and will result in greater parliamentary participation in the regulation of pesticides.

The content of the proposed new codes will depend on the outcome of negotiations later this year on the implementation of part III. Obviously, we shall draw to some extent on existing codes issued by my Ministry and on those already operated voluntarily by the industry.

We shall have to ensure that the new codes do not overlap other statutory codes issued under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. We shall be glad of the participation of hon. Members in the process of approval. The Ministry will discuss distribution with all interested parties so that they get to everybody who needs them. The hon. Gentleman asked that the codes be made available free or at a nominal cost. I cannot guarantee charges at this stage, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that the Highway Code is priced modestly.

Several hon. Members have aired their anxiety about training. We have made real progress on training and certification. Hon. Members have expressed their conviction that people who use pesticides should be trained appropriately. The hon. Member for Pontypridd said:

"There is a general principle that it is desirable that people using a toxic substance such as a pesticide should be trained in its use."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee H*, 23 April 1985; c. 267.]

We have accepted the point and stressed that the Bill has an important part to play in achieving the result—in general terms by introducing the requirement to act safely when applying pesticides and, more particularly, through our stated intention that those who apply pesticides commercially as their main business must demonstrate the appropriate level of skill training and supervision of those who apply the products. Health and safety at work legislation already has a major impact in terms of human safety.

The House has also accepted that it is reasonable to draw distinctions between those who apply pesticides as their main business and those, particularly farm workers, whose use of these products may be only occasional. I should stress that under this legislation the pressure will be on the farmer as well as on the professional operator.

It is likely that the codes of practice will advise on the appropriate level of skill to suit different circumstances, and the farmer as employer or operator will be wise to take account of this advice. As we said in Committee, there are several sources of training—the ATB, the chemical and machinery manufacturers and the local education authorities—but we will be discussing with the ATB in the first instance the practical problems in a programme to extend training to all those who need it.

Certification is the other side of the same coin in many ways, but there is one aspect which may worry hon. Members — the future of BASIS. Hon. Members reminded the Committee of the good work done by BASIS and that the manufacturers' and the merchant organisations felt strongly that BASIS should continue. We did not really need reminding: we were already keen to create conditions in which BASIS could continue to operate, which was why we came forward with the idea of the requirement for distributors to show proof that their premises are up to standard and that their staff are appropriately trained and supervised. We still believe that that is the right approach. I am pleased to learn that BASIS is responding to this possibility by giving itself a stronger base through direct elections of its board members and by preparing to alter its character to that of a certification scheme designed to furnish proof of achieving standards on the lines that we have it in mind to require. These are important changes and will, I believe, leave BASIS well equipped to serve the industry under the statutory scheme.

7.45 pm

Mr. John Carlisle: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said about BASIS, and the industry too, will be grateful. In view of my hon. Friend's strong support for BASIS, will she tell those members of it who might be considering withdrawing from the scheme because of the Bill that they should remain in it and try to strengthen it by their own membership?

Mrs. Fenner: I hope that what I have said will give them just the conviction that they need. The Bill will put responsibility for achieving specified standards on the industry. It is for the industry to respond as it thinks best. There might be different ways of achieving the same thing, but all will require some organisation. That is why we welcome the signs that the industry is preparing to organise itself and why we shall co-operate in the process.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd mentioned the number of inspectors. I shall not challenge the figures that he gave, but merely say that the Bill increases the numbers in response to what the Health and Safety Executive said it needs to carry out these statutory duties. I commend the new clause to the House.

Mr. John: I thank the hon. Lady for her positive reaction. She has made it clear that we are in the business of motor car manufacture. We have made the machinery—the Bill—which is good. The rest depends on the quality of the driver, the regulations and the code of practice.

I am grateful to the Minister for emphasising that Members of Parliament should be involved. We have shown a deep and abiding interest in the Bill's future and could help the Government in their deliberations. The problem about BASIS is one that I mentioned in connection with wood treatment. The danger is that, when statutory provision is made, the relevant voluntary body starts to fall apart. BASIS depends on high membership.

I agree that the agricultural training board is by far the best body to give farm workers necessary advice and training, but BASIS has provided an excellent scheme for some suppliers and merchants, and it should be continued. I should hate to think that we were doing anything to undermine it. I hope that the Government will continue to consider how to strengthen BASIS and how to avoid the possibility of its being undermined.

We moved some amendments to give BASIS statutory recognition because of this very fear. It will be up to the Government to show that a voluntary body can exist under a statutory framework. I also commend the new clause to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time and added to the Bill.

Clause 1

POWER TO MAKE EMERGENCY ORDERS

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 9, leave out 'or may have been'.

The amendment tightens up the Bill. The Bill is imprecise, largely because of the number of orders that will necessarily flow from the Act. There is much discretion in clause 1, which provides:

"if in the opinion of a designating authority"

and, one line later,

"there has been or may have been".

That allows far too much scope for the designating authority. One of the problems is that the designating authority could make wider use of the powers than is envisaged. Therefore, in all modesty, I suggest that the amendment will improve the Bill. The words "in the opinion of" in line 8 give sufficient discretion, and there is no need for a further imprecise phrase.

We appreciate that the Bill must be discretionary in many ways, but we must take every opportunity to tighten it where possible. If the amendment is not made, the designating authority may be tempted to widen the scope of its activity "just in case".

We had an interesting debate in Committee about the possible effects of a designation order, and I shall not dwell today on the possible consequences for smallholders, farmers, horticulturists and others. They could be severely hit if such an order was made at a time when crops were available for marketing. If it was made when soft fruit, such as strawberries, was ready for picking, it could bring financial disaster for the producer.

My hon. Friend the Minister suggested in Committee that risks of that kind could be covered by insurance. I have a later amendment seeking to set up a compensation system to cover cases in which an order is made when no pollution has actually occurred, so I shall deal with the insurance question when we reach that point. I hope, however, that my hon. Friend will accept this little amendment. If the amendment is made, it will encourage the designating authority to restrict its actions to the narrow area affected by a possible event. It will remove the temptation to place an embargo on movements in a much greater area "just in case."

Farmers cannot obtain insurance against such an event and the Government have not yet agreed to set up a compensation fund. In Committee, my hon. Friend the Minister said that she was confident that the Government would make orders only when there had been a hazardous release. If that is so, why do they need power to make orders when there may or may not have been such a release?

Mr. John Carlisle: I rise briefly to support the modest little amendment proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). The four words in question are an important element at the start of the Bill, and their removal would tighten the Bill and its interpretation.

There is great concern in the industry about the whole question of compensation and insurance—a subject to which we shall return later—and it is felt that the powers and the rules are far too wide. The amendment is both modest and short, but it well addresses the concern expressed. If we wish to ensure that the Bill is accepted by farmers and other trades, we must be conscious of the risk of things going wrong on inspection. The realms of the possible and the impossible have been discussed in the House many times. I believe that this comes within the realm of the possible and that the words in question should be deleted.

Mrs. Fenner: As drafted, clause 1(1) enables Ministers to make an emergency order to protect the public if, in their opinion, there has been a release of hazardous substances or if there may have been such a release. The amendment would narrow the scope for action at the discretion of Ministers. They could still act if, in their opinion, there had been an escape of a dangerous substance, but they could not act if there merely might have been such an escape. It is difficult to judge the practical effect of the amendment, as any action would still depend on the opinion of Ministers and not necessarily on fact proven beyond all doubt.

I have two criticisms of the amendment proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). First, the fact that its effect is uncertain must make it undesirable as law. Secondly, the Bill, as drafted, accurately states the Government's intention. If Ministers believe that

"there has been or may have been"

an escape or release of hazardous substances, they have a duty to take steps to protect the public. It is in the nature of the case that circumstances may arise in which they cannot at first be sure—hence the words "or may have been"—but if they are unsure of the full facts but believe that the public may well be at risk they should surely take precautions at once. That is the purpose of the Bill. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough and the House in general agree that that should be the purpose, but I believe that the amendment would weaken that purpose.

[Mrs. Fenner]

I need hardly assure the House that there is no intention of making emergency orders frivolously. The words "or may have been" are not intended to provide scope for Ministers to make orders recklessly or in the light of some remote possibility. Excessive or unreasonable action of that kind could render Ministers liable to challenge in the courts.

I hope that, in view of what I have said, my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough will agree to leave the clause as it stands and not seek to press his amendment.

Mr. John: I think that the Minister's embarrassment about this is largely of the Government's own making because in Committee they resisted the question of insurance so fiercely that the possibility of loss to the individual has become a very large issue. I believe, however, that the two subjects are severable. Therefore, although I agree very much with the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) on the question of insurance and making good losses sustained by individuals, I believe that the Government are right to maintain the fallback position. An almost platitudinous example is the type of event that occurred at Seveso. If anything illustrates the maxim that time is of the essence, it is an occurrence of that nature. In circumstances of that kind, the Government must be able to act on the best information at their disposal rather than having to wait until formal proof is available.

I am therefore willing to support the Government with my voice on this occasion, but there is a price. The price for the Government should be acceptance of amendment No. 4 or amendment No. 7 to indemnify anyone who suffers damage as a result of over-enthusiastic Government demarcation of a possible Seveso-type incident. If the Government offered to indemnify people in those circumstances, I believe that half the anxiety expressed by the hon. Member for Harborough would vanish immediately.

Sir John Farr: In view of what my hon. Friend said, and in the confident expectation that she will say something entirely different very shortly, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

8 pm

Mrs. Fenner: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 9 leave out

'a release (whether or not accidental)' and insert 'an escape'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 3, 5, 6, 8, 45 and 53.

Mrs. Fenner: In Committee, I undertook to look again at whether we could reasonably expect the courts to interpret "a release of substances" as including instances where substances had escaped accidentally. I still believe this to be the case, but I agree that it is important that there should be no question of any doubt.

The Government have therefore tabled these amendments which build on a suggestion made in Committee. All references in clauses 1 and 4 to "release" would be replaced by the word "escape", and "escape" would be defined as including the "release or expulsion" of substances whether

"by human agency or by any other cause".

There is a consequential amendment to the list of definitions in clause 22.

Mr. John: I spend most of my time in politics trying to live down the fact that I was a lawyer. As the House will know, lawyers are used to arguing both sides of the case. Having strongly argued that "release" was the wrong word and that "escape" was the right one, I am now tempted to reverse the process and to argue for the contrary.

I welcome the Government's acceptance of my point. This is a prime example of what the Welsh call "bwrw dy fara"—casting your bread upon the waters. I tabled a probing amendment in Committee, and the probe struck home. It revealed a drafting weakness that had to be put right. I therefore welcome the amendment very much and, despite the temptation to argue the contrary case, I must decline that brief on this occasion.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 3, in page 2, line 14, at end insert—

'"escape", in relation to substances, includes their release or expulsion by human agency or by any other cause;'.—*[Mrs. Fenner.]*

Mr. John: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 2, line 31, at end insert—

'(4A) The Ministers may jointly by regulations provide for the payment of compensation to any person who has incurred loss or damage as a result of the making of an emergency order in circumstances where no hazard to human health has been created in the area in which that loss or damage occurred.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may discuss amendment No. 7, in page 2, line 38, at end insert—

'( ) Where any person has incurred loss or damage in consequence of the making of an emergency order, and it is subsequently shown that no release of substances likely to create a hazard to human health through human consumption of food has taken place, the designating authority shall pay full compensation for the loss or damage.'.

Mr. John: These are the two amendments tabled by myself and the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) which relate to insurance. We were placed in a difficulty in Committee, in that when we differed we did not do so by halves. On this occasion, the difference was whether insurance was payable when an order was made by a Minister, but where pollution did not occur, or where the area designated was wider than required. Compensation was not provided for, but the Government assured us that this was an insurable risk.

The hon. Member for Harborough and I had differing information at our disposal which showed that such an eventuality was not insurable. I would prefer amendment No. 4, which is not just amour propre, but goes slightly wider than amendment No. 7. It is therefore only right that I should highlight the difference between the two amendments.

Whether or not the polluter can be identified is a separate question. Both these amendments relate to cases where a person has suffered loss and damage because Ministers have made an emergency order that goes beyond what is required. There are two possible scenarios. First, there might be no escape of a harmful substance or no occurrence might be evident. That is always possible so long as the words which the hon. Member for Harborough criticised remain in the Bill. Secondly, an escape could happen, but the area covered by the order might extend further than the area affected by the escape.

As I understand amendment No. 7, it will affect only the first example — where no escape of a harmful

substance took place. However, if the Minister made an order covering half a geographical county and loss occurred in the other half, it is right that the same principles should apply. That is why I prefer my amendment to that of the hon. Member for Harborough. I know, however, that he and I are at one on the sentiment behind these amendments.

The Government adopted a Maginot-line-type defence. Indeed, they had three separate lines of defence, any one of which they called on freely.

Mr. Ashdown: I seek some clarification from the hon. Gentleman. He said that his amendment was drafted with the intention of covering a designated area within which damage had not taken place or, alternatively, cases arising from the fact that the designated area was so large that some people were not affected whereas others were. If that is so, the word "area" in amendment No. 4 can be capable of being read in two different ways, and perhaps the word "place" would be better as the Bill uses the word "area" as meaning a designated area.

Mr. John: In fact, we are dealing with a designated area, because the Minister must designate it before the right to compensation can arise. An area must be set aside as having had a Seveso-type escape. A food producer may suffer a loss because of the designation of the area, even though his part of the area suffered no injury by reason of the escape.

There are two possibilities. First, there may be no escape even though the Minister has made an order. Secondly, the Minister could make an order in respect of an area, part of which is not affected by the escape. In my view, both situations are admirably covered by my amendment.

Since we debated the Bill in Committee, my research has shown that in this case the risk is uninsurable. Do the Government agree? All the evidence points to the fact that that is so. As well as being in uninsurable in principle, it is equally uninsurable because of the expense of the premiums. The NFU briefing and *Farmers Weekly* suggest that the Government have accepted that argument and have moved away frm their repeated assertion in Committee that this was a perfectly insurable risk.

The second defence is that the Government would not lightly make such an order — that they would never make such a mistake. One does not have to be a cynic or to be particularly partisan to know that Governments of all parties make mistakes when designating orders and regulations. If Ministers doubt that, I merely refer them to the social security regulations which were due to come into force on 19 December last but which have recently been declared illegal because the proper consultation procedure was not observed. Mistakes can be made. We cannot rely upon Government infallibility to get us through.

It is said that legal action is possible. I am doubtful about that because if the polluter were sued he would have the defence that the damage occurred because of the Government making the order rather than because of any wrongful act or attitude by him. How, and under what head, could the person affected by damage sue the Government? Would the person accuse the Government of negligence? He could certainly have the order put aside, but that would not entitle him to compensation and it would be of little use in terms of financial loss if all that he could prove was that the order was ultra vires or mistaken.

How would compensation be awarded against a Minister who made such an order? The Government made commitments to liaise with industry. What are the results? It is doubtful that a legal action would succeed because such an action would be expensive and speculative. In the two specific cases under which the Government make an order alleging that an escape is taking place when no such escape takes place, or make an order in relation to an area affected by such an escape, part of which is not affected by the escape, the Government should take the consequence of that order. They should say to the people who suffer damage through no fault of theirs—they are the innocent parties whatever view is taken—that they are able and willing to provide compensation. If such a provision will never be used it will cost the Government nothing to concede the principle.

Sir John Farr: I back 100 per cent. what the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) said in his usual clear way. There is much to be said for his amendment No. 4 in preference to my amendment No. 7, because his amendment covers what will happen when there has been a release and producers outside the affected area suffer a loss.

I tabled amendment No. 7 as a result of discussions in Committee, when the Minister assured me that such risks by producers when no escape had taken place would be covered by insurance. I wrote to Lloyd's. The chairman of Lloyd's underwriters' non-marine association told me in a letter:

"I have spoken with a number of my colleagues in the market relative the question you ask and regret to say that the consensus of opinion is that there will be little likelihood of a policy to protect the destruction of goods following an Emergency Order, which subsequently proved to be unnecessary, being available in the Market. One has to say that the market is already struggling with a number of problems as a result of possible pollution losses and the truth of the matter is that it probably has not come to terms with exactly how the cover should be provided following an action or pollution incident. As a result, the thought of providing cover for damage which may have occurred when pollution did not, I believe, is a remote possibility."

That clear statement prompted me to table amendment No. 7. The statement destroys the Minister's argument in Committee when she said that such risks were insurable. They are not. I hope that she will accept either amendment No. 4 or my amendment No. 7. If she does, she will gain a good deal of confidence among many food producers throughout the country.

Mr. Ashdown: I support the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) and his amendment No. 4. Like the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), I prefer amendment No. 4 to amendment No. 7 because it covers the case when no release has taken place and where a release has taken place when the area designated is wider than thought necessary at the time.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd said that the question of loss to the public was one of the key unresolved issues, and I agree. However, another key issue is involved. I hope that the Minister will agree with the hon. Member for Harborough, because in Committee insurance was a key defence in the Government's argument in favour of not accepting the need for compensation. That is no longer an argument, because such events are uninsurable.

There is a flaw in the drafting of amendment No. 4. The words cover only incidents when no release has taken place. The amendment states:

[Mr. Ashdown]

"no hazard to human health has been created in the area in which that loss or damage occurred."

The hon. Member for Pontypridd means to use the words "at the place" where the loss or damage occurred. I hesitate to take issue with him, but I think that he means the designated area, which might be some distance away. It would be clearer if the words were not "in the area" but "in the place".

Mr. John: If the principle is accepted, it will be easy for the Government to correct the wording.

Mr. Ashdown: I was hoping that the hon. Gentleman would say that, because the principle is impo tant. I hope that the Government will accept the principle, because if they do that will reassure the public. I urge the Government to accept the principle, for the reasons advanced by the hon. Members for Pontypridd and for Harborough, because that will strengthen the Bill and make it more reassuring.

8.15 pm

Mr. John Carlisle: It will be no surprise to my hon. Friends on the Front Bench to know that I sympathise with the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). We are talking about an important aspect of the Bill—as the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said, one of the Bill's few omissions. As the hon. Member for Pontypridd said, mistakes can happen. It would be a brave Minister who said that such mistakes could never happen.

We all agree in principle that the polluter should pay, but in many cases—let us not forget that we are talking in the realms of possibility—it will be difficult to know exactly who is the culprit, and my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough pointed out how such an eventuality could particularly affect soft fruit.

The inspectors may be highly qualified to do their work, but they may face emergency situations which have never been faced before. Might not an inspector panic and then err on the side of making recommendations which might later be discovered to have been an over-reaction, with the inspector having been over-zealous in his judgment?

As the Minister said when dealing with the previous amendment, the Government wish to protect themselves in this matter, just as we wish to protect the public, but a young, inexperienced inspector faced with a panic situation might recommend the destruction of foodstuffs on a wide scale, when in more measured circumstances such a judgment would not have been necessary.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough pointed out, the possibility of being insured for such an eventuality would appear to be nil. I have little knowledge of the insurance industry. I suggest, however, that somebody somewhere might be prepared to offer insurance, but the premiums would be prohibitive. In principle, therefore, I support the Opposition amendment or the amendment standing in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough.

We are dealing with a vital part of the Bill. Great concern was voiced in Committee, as it has since been expressed inside and outside the trade. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to allay some of the understandable fears that have been expressed.

Mrs. Fenner: Although they are not identical, the amendments have similar purposes. That in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) would require Ministers to pay compensation where they had made an emergency order as a precaution, though it turned out that no release of substances had taken place. The Opposition amendment would provide for compensation where there may or may not have been an escape of substances but it turned out that there had been no hazard to human health.

I hope that the amendment will not be pressed. Consider, first, the case postulated by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough where an order is made, even though no escape of dangerous substances has taken place. The case is highly unlikely, but it is conceivable. It is conceivable that some incident — say, at a chemical plant—might lead Ministers and their scientific advisers to believe that the public was or might be at risk. They would then take precautionary measures. The House will agree that that would have been the right course, even if it was subsequently discovered that there had been no danger.

As I said, the case is highly unlikely. It is even more unlikely that the measures involved would be of long duration. It should be remembered that the Bill gives Ministers powers to vary and to make exceptions to meet circumstances. In other words, it is a highly flexible measure. As soon as the true facts were established, the emergency measures would be withdrawn.

In the case that we are considering, the cost could hardly be great. However, that cost would be for the purpose of making sure that people near the incident were safe. No reasonable person could resent the cost and inconvenience of short-lived measures to make sure that people were safe.

The same applies in the circumstances envisaged by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John). In the possible case which Opposition Members have in mind, where an escape of substances has indeed occurred but is later found to be harmless, there would naturally be more likelihood that the safety measures would be kept in operation longer than in a case where nothing had escaped. Even so, it would not be long before the investigating officers studying the incident established that anxiety was needless.

In Committee, I pointed out that the Government were discussing the question of insurance with representatives of the insurance industry and that I would say more on that subject. We have not argued that it would be possible to insure against the possibility of measures being taken following an event which caused no damage or against a false alarm—the subject of the amendment—bearing in mind that the Government must still adopt the rule of safety first. But the safety first measures would not have to be of long duration and, therefore, they would not be costly.

More generally on the question of insurance, the Bill does not alter liability for loss or damage caused by an escape of dangerous substances. The responsibility remains with the potential polluter under ordinary principles of law. My officials have had a series of valuable meetings with representative organisations of the insurance industry, and one point to emerge is that, apart from the civil nuclear industry, where there are special

statutory arrangements, those who may incur third party liability have already assessed their risks and made appropriate insurance arrangements.

It is true, however, that the Bill may have the effect of increasing the cost of the consequences of an escape of substances, because of measures that Ministers might take under part I, but that aspect should not be exaggerated. The Bill is intended only to make sure that the safety measures that responsible citizens would probably adopt anyway could, if necessary, be imposed by Ministers. It will also enable Ministers to give prompt leadership in an emergency, and the public would probably welcome that, too.

Mr. Ashdown: Assume that there is a fire at a chemical plant with a good deal of ash falling—as in the case of Flixborough—on the surrounding countryside. It might take some days for the analysis of the ash to be completed to discover whether it was inert. At Flixborough it was found to be inert. It might be necessary in such a case for the action to cover a much broader area than, strictly speaking, was necessary at the time. What would be the plight of those in that designated area who had suffered disadvantage or loss as a result of sensible precautions taken by the Government in those circumstances?

Mrs. Fenner: It is possible to insure against the consequences, for example, of fire, explosions, and so on. Such matters might cause an escape of dangerous substances, with the need to take measures to restore safety. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that at Flixborough the dust was found to be inert and could be washed off, so that would not have come under part I of the Bill.

Mr. Ashdown: While the ash at Flixborough proved to be inert, the results could not, I think, be covered by insurance, because no loss or damage was caused by the ash. Any loss or damage was caused by sensible action taken by the Government on a safety basis to ensure that time allowed for the ash to be analysed.

Mrs. Fenner: I am assured that it is possible to insure against the consequences of fire, explosion, and so on—the events which may cause an escape.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my hon. Friend confirm that one cannot insure against a wrong decision being taken by a Government inspector? That is the nub of the amendment.

Mrs. Fenner: A wrong decision is unlikely, albeit conceivable. Ministers would want to give prompt leadership in an emergency, but that would not alter the measures that needed to be taken. As the Government have already stated, it would be up to business men and the insurance industry to consider, once the Bill is on the Statute book, whether they need to revise their existing insurance. The Government see no reason to alter——

8.30 pm

Mr. John: It is a return to the Committee stage on ice. Having said that the Government realise that the risk is not insurable, the Minister is saying now that it is for the insurance industry and the persons involved to make arrangements once the Bill is passed. As the risk is not insurable, is the Government's maxim to be that the polluter and the sufferer must pay?

Mrs. Fenner: We believe that it is the legal responsibility of the potential polluter. We made that clear several times in Committee. The Bill is not on the statute book. Whatever the actions of insurers would have been heretofore, they will be confronted with different circumstances once the Bill is on the statute book. The Government see no reason to alter their opinion that the courts would regard the effects of an emergency order made under the Bill as a foreseeable consequence of an escape of dangerous substances, and the legal responsibility of the potential polluter.

Again, as the Government have said, the courts could hold the Government responsible for the loss or damage——

Mr. John: In what way?

Mrs. Fenner: The hon. Gentleman asks, "In what way?" For loss or damage caused by an unreasonable or excessive use of the powers in part I. The issue of insurance does not arise there.

Mr. John: The Minister said that if there is no escape, the polluter has created a foreseeable risk and therefore given rise to the order. If there is no escape, the polluter has done nothing. There is no pollution. There is no entitlement to damages that I can discover, although other actions for a declaration against the Minister for wrongful use of power could be taken. It is no consolation to a farmer who has lost £20,000 in destroyed crops to say that he can obtain an order saying that the Minister was wrong if he can obtain no damages.

Mrs. Fenner: I can only reiterate that my advice—it was outlined again in another place—is that the courts could hold the Government responsible for loss or damage caused by an unreasonable or excessive use of the powers contained in part I. There is no issue of insurance there.

Discussions held between my Department and the insurance industry have covered the position of the possible polluter and sufferer. They have shown the need to be clear about what is being asked. Pollution as such is not insurable, and the Government have never envisaged that insurance policies would be likely to give cover expressly against the cost of any measures which might be taken by Ministers at any time under the Bill.

However, as I said to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), it is possible to insure against the consequences of fire, explosion, and so on, and those are the matters which may cause an escape of dangerous substances and consequential measures to ensure or restore safety. I hope that the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) will feel able to withdraw his amendment.

Mr. John: I am worried that the Minister should take that line. I do not think that it is a reasonable or fair response. It is merely a reiteration of what we were treated to in Committee. Nothing new has happened. In Committee, the hon. Lady said:

> "It is for the people concerned to protect themselves by proper insurance and the legislation must not interfere." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee H*, 21 March 1985; c. 55.]

I believe that I can speak on behalf of the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and other hon. Members when I comment that the Government are saying that in those circumstances people can pay for the pleasure of suffering damage from the mistaken use of Government power. I do not believe that to be right. I should not quarrel with the

[Mr. John]

sincerity of the Minister who made an order, but mistakes should be paid for. They cannot be insured against. I do not believe that the Government and the Minister can seriously pretend that they can be insured against.

If the Minister is suggesting that once there is an Act the insurance companies will take a radically different view, all I can say is that the quality of advice that she has received is not such as to impress me. I do not believe that the insurance companies will suddenly say, "We know that we have said all along that this risk is uninsurable, but now that it is an Act of Parliament it is insurable." It is or it is not a risk. That is the calculation of the insurance companies. It does not matter to them whether it is covered by an Act of Parliament. It may happen once in a million, once in a thousand, once in a hundred years, or never, but it is wrong just to say, "That is too bad," where the Minister makes an order and no escape is subsequently shown to have occurred and an innocent grower has suffered loss from the making of the order.

We are trying to protect people, but we cannot protect people properly by sentencing others to suffer financial consequences which may occur only once in a hundred years. However, once in a hundred years, if bankruptcy is the result, is more than the price that the House of Commons should be willing to pay for the wrongful use of ministerial power.

Mr. Ashdown: I wonder whether I can tempt the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) a little further. If we require the insurance companies to do something when the Bill becomes law, one of the factors that they will take into account will be the nature of the Minister's decisions. In other words, they will have to insure against a wrong decision taken by a Minister. We might reach the ludicrous position where insurance companies alter their premiums according to the views of the Minister taking the decision. Ultimately, they are insuring against wrong decisions taken by Ministers. Premiums might alter as Ministers changed office.

Mr. John: I can understand that with this Government there might be a principle of weighted premiums. The view of the insurance companies will not be changed because we have passed a Bill. They are under no greater or lesser responsibility to guard against the risk when the Bill is an Act than they were before. Their calculation is based upon whether the risk is insurable and, even if it is vaguely insurable, whether the premium is so excessive that it would price them out of the ordinary market. It is clear beyond peradventure that the Government are being unfair and are being seen to be unfair.

Amendment negatived.

Amendments made: No. 5, in page 2, line 32, leave out 'release or suspected release' and insert 'escape or suspected escape'.

No. 6, in page 2, line 37, leave out 'release or suspected release' and insert 'escape or suspected escape'.—*[Mrs. Fenner.]*

Clause 4

POWERS OF OFFICERS

Amendment made: No. 8, in page 5, line 24, leave out 'a release' and insert 'an escape'—*[Mrs. Fenner.]*

Mrs. Fenner: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 6, line 16, leave out from 'Act' to 'may' in line 17 and insert—

'(2A) An investigating officer or an enforcement officer.'.

The amendment is designed to correct an anomaly following amendments made in Committee to clarify the powers and duties of investigating and enforcement officers under part I.

At present, investigating and enforcement officers may be authorised to perform various functions under part I, including giving directions and taking action under clause 2(3), but only enforcement officers may seize things for the purpose of performing those functions. The amendment extends the power of seizure also to investigating officers.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5

REQUIREMENT OF LICENCES FOR DEPOSIT OF SUBSTANCES AND ARTICLES IN THE SEA ETC.

Dr. David Clark: I beg to move amendment No. 10, in page 7, line 16, at beginning insert—

'(1) The provisions of this Part of this Act shall have effect with a view to reducing the use of deposit in the sea as a means of disposal of industrial waste and sewage sludge.

(2).'.

Our purpose in moving the amendment is to declare our intention. We feel that it is right and proper that we should put in statute form our commitment to reduce the amount of industrial waste and sewage sludge that we as a nation dump into the sea.

As I have repeatedly alleged, we treat and regard the seas around us in a different light from our neighbours, especially in relation to sea disposal. That is not only my opinion. The Royal Commission on environmental pollution, in its 10th report, said in paragraph 4.100:

"the United Kingdom, with its long coastline and strong tides, sees both environmental and economic advantages in making use of the capacity of the seas to take waste materials. Other countries, with shorter and more vulnerable coasts, take a more pessimistic view of the possible damage."

The commission recommends

"that the Government should respond positively to the initiative of the Federal German Government and the Commission of the European Communities concerning the North Sea, and should promote international sponsorship of a review by an independent group of experts."

I have already quoted earlier this evening the attitude of the Dutch Ministry. We must take cognisance of our own record. It appears that in Britain we use the seas as a dumping and disposal ground because it is all too easy to do so. In that respect, we are becoming increasingly isolated. Unless we are very careful, we shall suffer an international diplomatic and political backlash and lose a great deal of good will because we are not prepared to treat industrial waste disposal and sewage sludge disposal in the way that our neighbours do.

8.45 pm

As the Minister knows, at the international conference on the protection of the North sea, which was held in Bremen in November last year, several countries joined in

a call for an immediate ban on all dumping in the North sea. Britain opposed it. I urge the Government to accept that there is a growing body of feeling which resents the way in which our Government seem not to be active in discouraging dumping. Unless we are careful, the North sea, in spite of its strong currents and its tidal systems, will eventually be in the same condition as the Mediterranean. I hope that the House is 100 per cent. against that prospect.

We believe that the pressure is now on Britain, and that is why we are moving the amendment. It is a declaration of the Opposition's intent. We must reduce dumping. I hope that the Government will accept the amendment.

I should like to remind the Government of the extent of dumping. Of all the industrial waste dumping in the North sea, almost 29 per cent. comes from Britain. The other 13 signatories account for only two-thirds of it. It is not only the amount that is worrying. The diversity of it causes great concern. All too often countries dump industrial waste when there is no easy alternative method of disposal. Even so, many of those countries are now taking determined steps to counter the practice.

I have the statistics for dumping licences issued by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for 1981. The 94 dumping licences were for a wide range of industries. Although the figures for 1981 show that there has been a reduction in the quantity of dumping from over 600,000 tonnes to over 400,000 tonnes, and that is welcome, it must not be seen as indicating a move away from dumping, because the respected ENDS report says that that reduction appears to reflect lower output and plant closures rather than a sustained attempt to seek alternative disposal outlets. We are using the method of dumping because it is the easy way out, and there can be no doubt about that.

In the report on the effects of the Oslo convention, the attitude of other countries is shown. Each country contributed a chapter to the report with regard to industrial waste. Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany and the Netherlands make clear their commitment to reduce the extent of sea dumping. Finland, Iceland, Norway, Portugal and Sweden undertake not to indulge in the dumping of industrial waste. Only Britain and the Irish Republic take a different view.

It is clear that other European countries are prepared to take, and are taking, action, but there is no sign that we are prepared to do so. There is no sign that the British Government are perturbed. That is why we are moving our amendment, and I hope that the House will feel able to accept it.

In Denmark, only one plant has been authorised to dump industrial waste, and Denmark's Minister of the Environment has recently taken steps to withdraw that dumping permit. The Belgians take a similar line. France makes the point that it has three plants producing phosphoric acid which dump a large amount of waste. They have been ordered by the prefect of Seine Maritime to reduce their discharges by 25 per cent.

West Germany is an industrial country of about the same size as Britain and with the same sort of industry, but of late it has taken some progressive attitudes towards pollution of the air and of the sea. The report states:

"The Federal Republic of Germany regards its national legislation, but also the London and Oslo Conventions, as the decisive tools for terminating waste disposal at sea (dumping and incineration) as soon as possible. The Federal Republic will end the dumping of waste from titanium oxide production—these are the only wastes still dumped at sea with a licence from responsible German authorities".

The Government claim that they will eliminate it by 1989 at the latest.

The chapter on the Netherlands states:

"it is the Government's ultimate objective to end the dumping of chemical waste altogether, if at all possible, at the earliest opportunity."

The chapter on the United Kingdom states:

"The United Kingdom approach to dumping at sea is essentially a pragmatic one of resource management based on the premise that the sea has an important part to play in the management of wastes and that its capacity to dilute and disperse waste may be used but not exceeded."

What do we mean by a pragmatic approach? Many people could rightly interpret that as meaning the easiest approach, the soft option, or the cheapest way.

The Government would do well to reflect on the recommendation of the Royal Commission in its 10th report, which on page 183, in recommendation 7.20, states:

"Foresight and prudence suggest that the United Kingdom should reappraise its stance on irretrievable discharges to the sea of toxic substances."

The information is there, which is why we feel that it is right and proper to insert the amendment in the Bill. If, in respect of industrial waste, the country and Governments of both parties have acted in a manner which is less than responsible and has caused great anxiety to many users of the sea, such as fishermen, we have acted worse on sewage sludge.

With the exception of the Republic of Ireland, we are the only nation of the Oslo signatories which dumps sewage sludge at sea. Indeed, 98·8 per cent. of sewage sludge dumped in European waters is dumped by the United Kingdom. That cannot be right. I suggest that we dump sewage sludge at sea because it is the easiest answer. It is worrying that the percentage is increasing. My figures — again they are slightly out of date — show that, whereas in 1975 we dumped 23 per cent. of our domestic sewage sludge in the sea, by 1980 it had increased to 31 per cent. On the other hand, sewage sludge rightly used for agricultural purposes fell from 50 per cent. to 43 per cent.

Obviously, there are dangers and difficulties about the use of sewage sludge, and the cheapest and easiest way to dispose of it is to put it into the sea. On the other hand, if we use it for agricultural purposes there is the problem of the metal content. No one should run away from that point. With the exception of lead, the level of mercury, cadmium and zinc in sewage sludge has been cut by half in the seven years from 1975.

We accept that the metal content poses a problem, but, equally, if every country but the United Kingdom finds it unacceptable to dump sewage sludge in the sea and can find alternative positive uses for it, there must be something in their line of argument. One way in which we have fallen down is that we are not spending sufficient money on research and development for the use of sewage sludge. It can be a valuable asset and is used in many countries for different purposes. Research and development, some of which is bound to be speculative and long-term, cannot be sustained without Government funding. The Government should be spending money on research and development in that area.

[Dr. David Clark]

To sum up our aims, I shall quote a former United Kingdom chairman of the Oslo commission, who in 1981 told the conference that there

"should be a revolution in our attitudes so that through technical advances, sewage sludge comes to be recognised as a valuable by-product for recycling instead of a waste product for which disposal routes have to be found."

We have tabled the amendment simply because we believe that, unless Britain is prepared to take action, the North sea will become the cesspool of Europe. No one wishes that to happen.

Mr. Ashdown: I join the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) in commending the amendment to the House. It calls for the progressive reduction of sea dumping and has been moderately drafted. It does not require that that should happen, but merely states that we should take action with a view to that end. The action that we would presumably have to take under the Bill would merely be aimed at that end. Surely, the Government would agree with that. They may not be able to achieve that end, but they must agree with taking action with that view in mind.

The amendment refers to sewage sludge and industrial waste. Although it does not specifically mention waste from nuclear industry, I assume that it is included under industrial waste. I shall concentrate on that subject. It is a pity that it is not mentioned specifically.

As the House knows, the dumping of waste from Britain's nuclear industry has temporarily been suspended pending an international review which is to be completed this year. The international review pending is revealed to those of us who have examined the facts as cosmetic. In reality, the comments of the Minister, the industry and most people who have spoken on the industrial side show that it is widely forecast that dumping will soon resume. Indeed, in Committee the Minister said:

"We believe that sea dumping is a safe and acceptable method of dispsal as long as it is carried out in accordance with international agreements." — *[Official Report, Standing Committee H*, 28 March 1984; c. 117.]

Why is the Minister waiting for the international review to be completed if he has come to the conclusion that dumping nuclear waste at sea is safe?

The radioactive waste management committee makes the same point in its evidence to the Select Committee on the Environment. It states:

"it seems unlikely that international reviews will come up with new scientific evidence."

The industry in the form of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority in evidence to the same Committee stated:

"Sea disposal is used for only a small volume of low and intermediate level wastes but it is very suitable for certain types of wastes."

I shall return to the various types shortly. It therefore appears that the United Kingdom will resume sea disposal in 1986.

Many of us who are opposed to the dumping of nuclear waste in our oceans have come to the conclusion that the Government have already made up their mind on the matter and that they are merely going through the motions. The present position is nothing short of cosmetic. In due course, there will be an increase in the dumping of nuclear waste at sea.

In its evidence to the Select Committee on the Environment, the UKAEA numbered among the items to be dumped

"certain bulky items from the future decommissioning of redundant plant".

I wonder what those bulky items are that are so coyly described. They might be oil drums, but there is evidence that they are likely to be something much more significant in size. Indeed, it is highly likely that we are talking about the dumping of major parts of power stations. As we know, the Magnox power stations were designed for a working life of only 20 years. According to a parliamentary answer on 8 May 1985, five Magnox power stations have already been operating for more than 20 years, and by next year, four more will have been operating for more than 20 years. Therefore, by next year we shall have nine nuclear power stations which, according to the UKAEA, will be

"bulky items from the future decommissioning of redundant plant".

9 pm

It is possible that the lives of those power stations will be extended by five years, but there is no doubt that there will soon be a massive decommissioning programme of nine nuclear power stations. I suspect that the UKAEA is talking about filling the oceans with massive chunks of nuclear junk. The reactor of a Magnox power station is estimated to weigh tens of thousands of tonnes, and I am told that an advanced gas-cooled reactor weighs 130,000 tonnes. If the Government do not accept that we should have a view towards action to reduce dumping at sea, they should tell us what they have in mind for the decommissioning of those nine plants. They cannot be buried. Are the Government reluctant to accept such an amendment because they wish to retain the possibility of dumping large parts of those power stations in the North sea?

We must realise why the amendment's call for a progressive reduction in the dumping of industrial waste in the sea is vitally important. Scientific calculations have shown that the effects of the chain reaction started by the dumping of nuclear waste may not be known for 50 years. We started dumping in 1949, so its effects have not yet come to light. Paragraph 5.8 of the Holliday report, which refers to nuclear waste dumped at a depth of 4,000 m, states that it would take 33 years for plutonium 240 to turn up and have an effect on the human cycle. That means that the first of the waste dumped in 1949 would have started to turn up in 1982. We must also consider the cancer-producing effects of such dumping, which, at the earliest, could occur in 15 years' time. The Holliday report also states that it might take 95 years for the effects of polonium 210 to come to the surface.

This is an important amendment which requires us to take action with a view to reducing the disposal of industrial, and therefore nuclear, waste in the sea. I hope that the Government will accept it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clarke) on an especially lucid speech. It served to show the country the value of the title, which he so richly deserves, of the Labour party's green spokesman. Increasingly, the Labour party has considered such matters as important, which is why we decided to have a green spokesman. There are many green issues which affect millions of people.

My hon. Friend said that Britain was almost the only Oslo convention country to dispose of sewage in the sea. That process give Britain cheaper infrastructural costs and places it in an unfair competitive position with its trading partners in every possible way. The Minister would do well to consider the position of landlocked countries. They simply do not have the sea into which to push their sewage. They have to make arrangements that are more expensive, but somehow they manage to include them in their infrastructure costs and remain competitive.

The amendment says:

"The provisions of this Part of this Act shall have effect with a view to reducing the use of deposit in the sea as a means of disposal of industrial waste and sewage sludge."

The intention is therefore to reduce dumping at sea of low, intermediate and high-level waste. In the past few years, the dumping at sea of low-level radioactive waste has been controlled by the London dumping convention and the Dumping At Sea Act 1974, which is being repealed in part by part II. These arrangements have caused increasing international concern.

In 1983, a meeting of the London dumping convention voted to suspend dumping of low-level radioactive waste at sea. The vote was not binding, but following action by the National Union of Seamen, Britain was forced into line. The Government and the TUC then supported an independent inquiry under Professor Holliday. In November last year it published its report, which found that radioactive dumping has a low impact on the environment. However, it recommended wider international reviews. This was referred to by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). A meeting in 1983 of the parties to the London dumping convention could not decide whether the disposal at sea of high-level waste was covered by that convention. The regime is based on confusion.

I shall now point out precisely whence cometh the material about which we speak. In Britain, radioactive waste originates from four main sources — the commercial nuclear fuel cycle, the military nuclear weapons programme and defence-related activities, institutions such as hospitals or universities that use radioactive materials for chemical research purposes, and the industrial use of radio isotopes. A fifth source — uranium mining—is not found in Britain.

Some 80 per cent. of radioactive waste, and potentially the most dangerous, is created by the nuclear power programme. The Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive estimates that the volume of intermediate and high-level waste is equivalent to 35,000 cu m in total. The volume is equivalent to a football pitch five metres in height. That perhaps gives the public and the House some idea of the amount of material that we are considering.

The Government's policy on radioactive waste disposal is based largely on the recommendations of the Royal Commission's sixth report of 1976 on nuclear power in the environment. In 1981, the 10th report supported a modest increase in the nuclear capacity in Britain provided that the principles for environmental protection set out in the sixth report were satisfied. Today, the Government and the nuclear industry alike recognise that finding the solution to the nuclear waste problem is the critical gap in the desire to expand the British civil nuclear programme.

Until the Royal Commission's sixth report, there was little public discussion or apparent appreciation of the problems of the radioactive waste management. It was criticised in the sixth report as showing

"insufficient appreciation of long-term requirements either by government departments or by other organisations concerned . . . a much more urgent approach is needed, and the responsibilities for devising policy and for executing it need to be more clearly assigned".

The current proposals for the management of radioactive waste have evolved since 1977. The Royal Commission's sixth report's conclusions have led in turn to the Department of the Environment being given overall responsibility for the management of radioactive waste. But it has been plagued by a number of technical problems. They include the possibilities of a migration of radioactive elements through geological processes, also the possibility of disruptive geological events and also the possibilities of human intervention.

All that must be read against a background of very strong public reaction and resistance to the burying of nuclear waste in various parts of the United Kingdom. It seems that no one wants it, and that is the story we learn from Stockton-Billingham and Bedfordshire, the last two sites that have been identified for waste disposal.

The truth is that no one wants nuclear waste, and therefore I believe that the Government should set about establishing a more realistic alternative.

It was put most effectively by NIREX in its journal, *Plaintalk*, of May this year. In an editorial headed "Plaintalking", it asked:

"Why the delay on new sites? Following the Government statement in the House of Commons in January asking NIREX to name at least three alternative sites for investigation as possible near-surface repositories, we said in answer to questions that we hoped to name them in early summer. June is now upon us and you might well be asking, why the delay? The short answer is that it is not as easy as it looks! Our task is to find a safe and environmentally sound way of disposing of the nation's low and intermediate level radioactive waste. That means exploring lots of alternatives and studying hundreds of different locations to find one that will fulfil each very important condition for a good safe site."

My view again is that there is no solution available within the United Kingdom. There is no way of resolving the problem of disposing of nuclear waste, and we must look elsewhere and to another solution.

Before I do that, it might be wise of me to comment on the position in the United States of America and in Canada. In those countries, the practice of waste disposal is currently carried out in above-ground engineered structures. The Tennessee Valley authority, an American electrical utility, has built above-ground storage modules at the Sequoyah nuclear plant in Tennessee. Several utilities in the north-east of the United States are designing and building similar facilities. Ontario Hydro, which operates eight nuclear reactors, has built a central storage area at the Bruce nuclear reactor.

I was in America some years ago, and I went with a congressman to attend his hearings on nuclear waste disposal in Connecticut. Throughout the course of the hearings, repeatedly we were confronted with lobbies, not just anti-nuclear lobbies but local environmental lobbies, community lobbies, women's organisations and so on, all objecting to disposal arrangements for nuclear waste. It may be that they did so to some extent out of ignorance, but the point is that the public's perception of nuclear waste is that it is dangerous. Whether it is dangerous is not relevant. If the public believes that it is dangerous and if,

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

however much politicians and bureaucrats set out to convince people that it is not, it does not work and the case does not get over, we must face reality and find solutions for the disposal of nuclear waste which meet people's anxieties and fears.

It was on that basis that in Committee I put forward a proposal for dealing with the problem when we discussed the matter some weeks ago. I put forward the rather novel but, I repeat, serious proposition that we should identify somewhere on this earth, a small piece of land away from the great centres of population—away from the United States of America, western Europe, the United Kingdom and all the major industrialised and populated countries —a small island, perhaps. It was even said by one of my hon. Friends in a previous debate that the Falkland islands would provide a good locational solution. I do not advocate such a proposition because some of my hon. Friends might laugh at it, but in principle the Falkland islands offer a solution.

Although I do not submit the Falkland islands as a solution, there are other islands of a similar nature which, if we approached the problem in a responsible manner, could offer a locational solution for the disposal of nuclear waste. A regime should be established at that location which would be responsible for the management of waste disposal. It would draw upon the expertise of all the countries which were contributing waste for disposal at that site. The management would be responsible for planning the disposal and also for policing and security.

9.15 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): My hon. Friend is proposing that there should be a centralised approach to the storage of waste materials. Does he not agree that, because of the hazards that would ensue from this approach it would be better to adopt a distributive approach to the disposal of waste?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend has referred to the hazards. I do not necessarily accept that the public perceive that such hazards exist. This measure is concerned with satisfying world opinion. It is not only the people of the United Kingdom who express concern about the disposal of nuclear waste. This is an international problem. The same debate is taking place in all the western countries that rely upon nuclear power. Environmental lobbies in all those countries are demanding that proper solutions should be provided to this problem. I am putting forward a single-site solution to the problems of nuclear waste. Countries throughout the world could contribute the nuclear waste that they generate and participate in policing the site.

During the earlier proceedings, the Minister of State offered to deal with the matter and to write to me. As his letter is not on the record, I want to read part of it because it sets out the Government's views on my proposition. The Minister of State said:

"I find there has been talk from time to time about the possibility of international disposal facilities, and polar and desert regions have been suggested as suitable. However, much of this talk has been essentially speculative."

I have not proposed either polar or desert regions, but I understand why the Minister referred to them. He continued:

"You may have seen that a Technology, Growth and Employment Working Group established by the seven Western Summit countries at Versailles in 1982 has recently suggested that an existing international scientific organisation should review available information in order to assess the merits of optimising the number of storage and disposal sites for radioactive wastes from the points of view of costs, environmental impact and logistical considerations. They envisaged that this would be combined or co-ordinated with a conceptual study of international waste repository systems which is being undertaken by the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) of OECD. However the Radioactive Waste Management Committee of NEA has emphasised that the priority must lie with the development of pilot land disposal facilities at a national level . . . my environmental colleagues see major legal, logistical, technical and political difficulties in developing a single site to take all countries' waste."

The Minister referred to

"legal, logistical, technical and political difficulties",

but it would seem to me that legal difficulties could arise only from the title to the land which is used for disposal. I should have thought that such difficulties could be dealt with quite easily within the framework of international law. Perhaps the Minister can explain to what extent such legal complications might arise, as I understand that it is only a question of title.

Logistical difficulties were also mentioned, but the means of transportation are available. We are already transporting such material around the world. Similarly, when it comes to technical difficulties, the technology is already there. Members of Parliament, particularly those who have some connection with the nuclear industry, are besieged weekly by organisations that tell us of the advances that are being made in the technical arrangements governing the disposal of nuclear waste.

Finally, the Minister mentioned political difficulties. But if the international will is there to find a solution, there can be no political difficulties. According to the Minister's letter, the NEA has stated that the development of pilot land disposal facilities at a national level must be the priority. In suggesting that, it is sticking to the existing regime, and telling us all to keep our nuclear waste and to solve our own problems. It is saying that we should find our own sites within our own countries. But that is what the whole argument is about, because no one wants nuclear waste. I say that as a supporter of the nuclear industry. Why do we not deal with the problem? A whole industry of environmental groups has set up in this country. At the heart of their existence is the argument about the disposal of nuclear waste. Indeed, 99 per cent. of the arguments about Windscale are not about nuclear power but about nuclear waste and its disposal.

If nuclear power is to be accepted in this country, we must identify and deal with the problems that cause the public so much concern. Ministers ignore the responses of such organisations, and simply do not understand the pent-up pressure within the system. If they do not deal with that pressure, the anti-nuclear lobby will become stronger as the years go by and will eventually strangle the industry. The Government will be held responsible.

Mr. MacGregor: Judging by the phrasing of the amendment, it is simple and fairly clear. However, the debate has opened up a much more wide-ranging set of issues. Moreover, the amendment's implications are anything but clear. I hope to show that it is not only unnecessary, but that it could also prejudice the aims of part II and at times be environmentally damaging, rather than the reverse.

I shall begin by briefly examining the quantities dumped in the past few years. In Committee, I gave some

figures, but I shall give two more that bear directly on the amendment. The most recent year for which statistics are available is 1983. Judging by the definitions of the London convention, the amendment is talking about liquid industrial waste not radioactive waste.

Dr. David Clark *indicated assent.*

Mr. MacGregor: I see that the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) agrees, so I may, strictly speaking, be out of order when I make a few remarks about nuclear waste. But the tonnage of liquid industrial waste——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is industrial waste.

Mr. MacGregor: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was putting his notes together, but I did just explain that, according to the normal conventions, the definition of industrial waste here applies to liquid industrial waste. Indeed, the hon. Member for South Shields nodded his agreement.

Between 1980 and 1983, the tonnage of liquid industrial wastes and sludges fell by 34 per cent., and that of sewage sludge by 18 per cent. I recognise that some part of that fall may be due to the level of economic activity. Nevertheless, those are very substantial reductions in the tonnage of liquid industrial wastes and sludges and of sewage sludge. Incidentally, sewage sludge certainly cannot be related in the same way to the level of economic activity.

The figures that I quoted in Committee are worth repeating. Between 1977 and 1983, the quantity of cadmium and mercury in dumped sewage sludge fell by 65 per cent. and the number of licences for dumping at sea fell by 29 per cent.

The hon. Member for South Shields mentioned incineration. The difficulties of international comparisons are demonstrated by the fact that the United Kingdom is not heavily dependent on marine incineration. In 1982, we contributed less than 2 per cent. of the total in the Oslo convention area. I shall mention sewage sludge later, but it is important to point out that our contribution on marine incineration is tiny.

The Oslo convention countries have to meet before 1990 to decide about the future of marine incineration and one of the factors that will influence their decision will be the availability of other methods of disposing of the wastes in question. I shall return to that aspect. It is too early to say what those countries will decide about marine incineration, but, whatever the decision, the Bill will give us power to implement it. As I said, we make a very small contribution to any problems caused by marine incineration.

I should ensure that I am being fair all round by admitting that the amount of colliery waste and fly ash rose between 1980 and 1983, but those solid materials are generally regarded as inert, and I think that the Opposition are more worried about liquid wastes and sewage sludge, which both show substantial reductions.

Therefore, my first comment must be that we are moving in the direction that the Opposition seek. I share the view of the hon. Member for South Shields about the need to avoid the problems that have arisen in the Mediterranean. We have made substantial progress — much more than many other countries—in dealing with industrial wastes in rivers and their pollution of the sea.

The hon. Member for South Shields, in his response to new clause 1, suggested that we had a more relaxed attitude than our neighbours to dumping at sea and that there were suspicions that by leaving out of the original drafting of the Bill the provision that has been re-inserted by new clause 1 we were seeking to abide less by the conventions.

I refute both those suggestions. On the claim that we are less keen to abide by the conventions, I should point out that new clause 1 dealt with a narrow point about co-operative procedures—a mechanism which has never been used under the conventions. I was happy to put the provision back into the Bill, but whether new clause 1 is in the Bill has nothing to do with our willingness and enthusiasm to abide by the conventions. We already have under the Bill all the powers necessary to abide by the conventions, and I have made it clear on many occasions that we abide by them firmly.

The hon. Gentleman also suggested that we had a more relaxed attitude than our neighbours to dumping at sea. Hon. Members who served on the Standing Committee will remember that I made a long statement on the subject, but perhaps Committee *Hansards* are not read as widely as they sometimes deserve to be read. Therefore, I shall repeat some of the points that I made in Committee. It is relevant to point out, in relation to our responsibilities under the conventions, that we provided the chairman of the Oslo convention from 1980 to 1984 and played a leading role in gathering the scientific information for the North sea conference at Bremen. We are hosting the next conference. Those are hardly the actions of a Government unconcerned about the North sea. They show clearly that we have played a major role in the conventions.

9.30 pm

The evidence is also against the hon. Gentleman. I should like him, or others, to give some evidence to show that the United Kingdom plays the biggest polluting role in the North sea. The last North sea conference showed clearly that the major problems arose from continental rivers. I am not in the slightest complacent about the problem, but we must get the perspective right. The hon. Member for South Shields said again that we contribute 98 per cent. of the sludge dumped in the Oslo area. That sludge is only about one third of the total that we produce. Most of the rest is disposed of on land. Moreover, it represents only a tiny proportion of the heavy metals and nutrients entering the marine environment. In Committee, I said:

"sewage sludge accounts at most for only 1 per cent. of the heavy metals entering the North sea."

Dumping is only a minor input into the marine environment. Even on the most pessimistic calculations, dumping, other than dredging, accounts for no more than 3 per cent. of the input of heavy metals into the North sea. The major contributors to the marine environment are the atmosphere and rivers.

When considering the biggest polluter, we must assess what types of contribution are causing the biggest pollution. Just one continental river—the Rhine-Meuse — accounts for at least three times as many heavy metals as all dumping operations. As I said in Committee:

"The geographical areas about which there is the most pressing concern are the German bight and the Wadden sea, which are not affected at all by United Kingdom dumping, but are seriously polluted by inputs of the Elbe and the Rhine-Meuse —[*Official Report, Standing Committee H*, 28 March 1985; c. 114.]

[Mr. MacGregor]

I refute the charge that we are major polluters, and I refute most strongly the allegation that we are not worried about it.

Unlike many other inputs into the sea, dumping is subject to strict controls, the main aim of which is to ensure that the environment is protected. Dumping makes a comparatively small contribution and is subject to strict controls, so there is no significant evidence of damage around our shores or that disposal is uncontrolled. It would be wrong to make policy changes, which would often have adverse effects on other parts of the environment, without having a firm scientific basis for such changes.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister says that there is no evidence of damage to our coastline. Does he not take his family to our coasts in the summer? Has he never seen the filth, the excreta, the toilet paper and the rubbish piled up on beaches? Has he not seen the material that floats in the sea, even just off some of our major resorts? Does he agree that the Government have some responsibility to deal with the problem urgently, or is he blind? Does he simply refuse to accept that there is a problem? That is what his statements imply.

Mr. MacGregor: Anybody who tries to put problems into perspective runs the risk of being accused of not bothering about some aspect of the matter. I was endeavouring to show that, in regard to the charge that we are major polluters of the North sea, many other considerations must be brought to bear if we are to get a fair picture. Of course I am concerned when I see rubbish, but I have often seen more of what the hon. Gentleman described on Mediterranean beaches when I have taken my family abroad.

Of course we are anxious to improve matters. I have given the figures which show how we are improving the situation and which distinguish us from some other countries. We put heavy emphasis—rightly, in my view—not on particular emotional charges, if I may so put it, but on strict scientific criteria. I am not arguing that we should not make improvements. I am arguing that, in enshrining certain policies in legislation, we must ensure that they are based on strict scientific criteria. I agree with the hon. Member for South Shields that this is one way in which we differ from some other countries, but I believe that we are right to put that emphasis on the strict scientific criteria.

Having demonstrated that improvements are being made and that quantities have declined, why can we not accept the amendment? First, it is potentially inconsistent with the aims of part II of the Bill. Clause 8 strengthens the provisions of the Dumping at Sea Act. The need to protect the marine environment and its living resources has been the cornerstone of dumping policy since 1974. I do not think that that has been challenged, but the amendment could have the unintended effect of calling it into question. *[Interruption.]* I hope that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will listen, because in developing policy we must be careful about the implications of what we are doing.

The amendment implies that quantitative reductions are the best way to protect the marine environment, but that is an oversimplification, because the sea's capacity to absorb waste varies from place to place. It may be possible to dispose of a large quantity of material at a site where the currents are highly dispersive, but a much smaller quantity may cause problems at a less suitable site. In other words, it is more important to have regard to the capacity of each site than to concentrate entirely on total quantity. That is why the conventions emphasise the examination of site characteristics—an obligation that we implement by means of the licence conditions under clause 8.

The licensing authority often has to persuade applicants to accept particular conditions, and the willingness of applicants to go to environmentally better but probably more distant sites could well be inhibited by a provision which prevented any increase in the quantities licensed.

Mr. Ashdown: The clause to which the amendment relates refers specifically to the depositing of solids in the sea, so it covers the points raised in my intervention and that of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). The Minister is putting too much emphasis on quantity. That is not what the amendment says. The amendment refers to

"reducing the use of deposits in the sea as a means of disposal".

That can be read in all sorts of ways. It does not have to hang on quantity. It could hang on type or nature. It means reducing deposits in the sea as an option necessarily used by us, so the Minister's argument about quantity does not apply.

Mr. MacGregor: The amendment could refer to quantity, and many people will see it in that context; but that is not the main argument on which I rest my opposition. I was merely pointing out the danger of diminishing the impact of the Bill by insisting on the amendment, because quantity will be the factor that most people have in mind.

The far more powerful objection on which I rest my opposition to the amendment concerns the availability of alternative methods of disposal and the effect on the environment generally. The Government have tabled an amendment to clause 8 in response to an Opposition-led debate in Committee. That amendment will require the licensing authority to have regard to the practical availability of alternatives. The Opposition pressed the Government on that and I have conceded the point. In Committee, I said that I wished to give the matter further thought, and I have now tabled an amendment.

In my view, it is dangerous for the Opposition to ask us to have regard to what is feasible and practicable but then to argue that reductions in dumping at sea should be pursued regardless. I should have thought that the Government amendment went a long way towards meeting the objective of the present amendment, but by a much better and more effective route.

On a more technical point, I am somewhat surprised at what has been included in the amendment and what has been omitted. Dredgings constitute the largest tonnage and the bulk of the heavy metals—I am told that dredgings account for more than half the dumping—but they are not mentioned in the amendment. Is that because there are no practical alternatives or because, by and large, the Opposition do not regard them as damaging to the environment? I am not clear, but it is strange that one of the major contributors to dumping should have been left out of the amendment. Whatever the reason, it is clear that other wastes could fall into the same category.

Many of our conurbations are near the coast, and their sewage sludge is dumped at sea. The alternative is to transport it by road for spreading on land. Would that be

a practical proposition in the London area? In addition, dilute liquid industrial waste is not particularly damaging to the open marine environment — the amount of harmful substances is too low for that — but the only alternative method of disposal would be discharge into rivers, where further dilution would be slower. Perhaps the considerations that have excluded dredgings should apply here as well.

I could also mention other areas that have been excluded from the amendment, such as radioactive waste, marine incineration and sub-seabed disposal. I say that only to demonstrate that, even in its own terms, the amendment is incomplete and does not deal with some of the areas that most affect pollution of the marine environment.

I have given the main arguments against the amendment, although I hope I have made it clear that I am entirely at one with the Opposition in wishing to do anything that can reduce pollution at sea.

The hon. Member for South Shields referred to research into sewage sludge. The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) and I had an exchange on that subject in Committee, and I have written to him since. I hope he will not mind if I refer briefly to part of that response. It is worth drawing it to the attention of a wider audience as it deals with a real concern.

The main thrust of our research into the disposal of sewage sludge is to improve the treatment of sewage and to monitor its quality and the effects of current methods of disposal. I hope that the House will agree that improvements in treatment are just as important for new disposal methods as for traditional ones. They are also just as important as looking at novel sewage sludge disposal methods.

These novel methods are currently being investigated, but none has been given a high priority—certainly not as high as improving the treatment of sewage, which at the end of the day has the same beneficial effect on pollution —because their practical application is not yet proven. The types of projects under consideration are conversion to animal feed, incorporation into building materials, production of earth worms and conversion to fuels. Some of these have been tried commercially, but have so far failed because the end product was more expensive than a similar conventionally produced product.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) spoke of radioactive dumping. I gave the Government's position on that in Committee. It is fairly well known that we accepted the main recommendations of the Holliday report—that dumping should not resume until the various current reviews in the London dumping convention, the IAEA and the Nuclear Energy Agency were completed. The report also recommended that we should publish a comparative study of all the options for nuclear waste disposal. We have accepted all of those.

Progress is being made on the various stages of the review in the LDC and related organisations, and, as recommended by the Holliday team, the Department of the Environment is reviewing the best practicable environmental option for disposal of each type of radioactive waste. The report will be shown to the team and to the radioactive waste management advisory committee, and it is hoped that it can be finalised around the end of the year. At present, we are working through the various international and national reviews on this subject. It is too early to predict when they will be finished or what the outcome will be, but the position will be clearer by the end of the year.

The hon. Member for Workington and I had an exchange, followed by written correspondence, about his suggestion of finding one international site to which most nuclear waste could go. I very much hope that his reference to the Falklands was a joke, because I do not want to see any headlines in the morning indicating that in any way that was a sensible suggestion. However, the hon. Gentleman greatly underestimates the difficulties. It is fairly obvious to us all that there are difficulties in finding a further national site for disposal. Such difficulties are technical, logistical and, above all, political. The difficulties of achieving agreement on a single site on an international scale are formidable.

9.45 pm

I hope that I have said enough about the defects of the amendment and about the progress that we are making to persuade hon. Members against the amendment. Dumping at sea is not an easy option in the United Kingdom. We require applicants to justify their use of sea routes. The Government have amended legislation to take account of alternative methods. We would not permit dumping if there were an easy alternative. For the reasons that I have given, it would be a mistake to agree to the amendment because it could be counter-productive.

Dr. David Clark: I am disappointed with the Minister's response. A general unease is felt, not only by Opposition Members but by some people in other EEC countries. I admired the Minister's spirited defence of Government policy, but it revealed the Government's isolation.

The Minister asked for evidence that the United Kingdom is the major polluter of the North sea. The Royal Commission on environmental pollution, in paragraph 4.9, describes the estimated contaminant loads for the North sea. There is no doubt that we contribute considerably more than any other nations which border the North sea. That is well known and the recommendations make it clear that the Government should change their policy.

I recognise the improvements that have been made. Fish can now live in the Thames and the cleaning of rivers such as the Tyne has improved the quality of the environment enormously, to the benefit of the people who live near them and to the benefit of those who enjoy their leisure by the use of such rivers.

Dumping is responsible for only a small part of the pollution. Pollution affects rivers and the atmosphere and is caused naturally. However, we can do something about dumping, and we should tackle the problem. Much pollution is cumulative and if we can tackle one aspect of it we should act.

I was surprised at the Minister's defence of the sewage sludge problem. It causes inconvenience to the outer sections of the North sea and to inshore areas. Fishermen off the north coast of England will tell the Minister of their dislike of the dumping of sewage sludge only five miles off the mouth of the river Tyne. We spent millions of pounds clearing up that river so that salmon could breed there, yet sewage sludge is still being dumped 5 km or 12 km from the mouth of that river.

[Dr. David Clark]

I thought that the Minister was reasonable when he said that sewage sludge occurs in conurbations and other built-up areas and that therefore it would not make sense to transport it by road to treat it elsewhere. As he said, many of the conurbations are by the sea, so it is easy to load the sewage on barges, and he cited the case of London.

It is equally easy for that sewage sludge to be transported into the country, where it could be treated. Landing sites around our coastline could be used to take profitable industry from some of those conurbations to rural areas for the treatment of sewage sludge. Let us not forget that in parts of the country—for example, south Yorkshire — a large percentage of sewage sludge is treated simply because it costs too much to transport it to the sea.

It is possible, therefore, to tackle the problem in the way we suggest; and that is proved not only by what happens in Britain now but by what is done in other countries. The Minister did not attempt to deny that over 98 per cent. of the sewage sludge dumped in the seas around Europe is dumped by the United Kingdom.

Our amendment states the national position. It is, in a sense, a declaration of intent. We were not convinced by the Minister's argument and I quote against him a statement made at a recent conference:

"the several countries interpret the need to consider land-based disposal as mandatory, with dumping as an option in the last resort. Most Oslo Convention countries which permit industrial waste dumping do so only for a very limited number of wastes for which there are genuine difficulties in finding alternative disposable routes. This is in marked contrast to the United Kingdom's practice of accepting a wide range of wastes for sea disposal, provided they can be disposed of without unacceptable environmental charges."

That statement was made by one of the Ministers senior scientific advisers whom I will not embarrass by naming. The view of our neighbours is even more colourful. We believe that in the national interest we should clearly state our intention. That is the purpose of the amendment, and we are disappointed by the response of the Government.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. MacGregor: I beg to move amendment No. 11, in page 7, line 19, leave out 'in United Kingdom waters' and insert

'within United Kingdom waters, either in the sea or under the sea-bed'.

Mr. Speaker: It will be convenient to consider at the same time Government amendments Nos. 12 to 16, 19, 20 and 54.

Mr. MacGregor: These amendments deal with sub-seabed disposal, which is one possible method of disposing of radioactive waste. As yet, its technical feasibility remains to be proved, and the legal situation is also under consideration. We are not sure whether it can be done, how it may be done, and, while agreeing that the London dumping convention is the right international forum in which to elaborate controls, we should not pre-empt its decisions. It is in these rather difficult circumstances that we are trying to legislate.

In Committee we had a very constructive debate following amendments tabled by the Opposition which would have extended the Bill's scope to cover deposits under the seabed. At that time I was hesitant about specifying powers in a Bill for a situation for which we could not predict properly in advance, but agreed to look again at the question.

I emphasised that there was uncertainty about the technology to be used in sub-seabed disposal and about any decisions on a regulatory framework which might be made under the convention. For those reasons, I was hesitant about making specific provision now, but I accepted that if we had no provision in the Bill we would not be able to control or prohibit such activities at all. After much thought, we have come up with these amendments.

The hon. Members for Pontypridd (Mr. John) and for South Shields (Dr. Clark), who mentioned this subject in Committee, will be pleased to see that we have not departed much from their original drafting. That shows that both sides of the House have been looking with open and constructive minds at the Bill, and I am grateful for the generous comments of the hon. Member for Pontypridd, and of the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) through the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown).

There are, however, a few additions, especially to deal with vehicles, which are intended to make the controls as comprehensive as possible. There are a few consequential amendments to the provisions on enforcement, on the public register of licences and to the Bill's long title.

The effect of all that is that any operation of sub-seabed disposal would be subject to the same control as would ordinary deposits at sea. That is to say, if the operation takes place in United Kingdom waters, or if the loading takes place in the United Kingdom, or if the vehicle or vessel concerned is British, a licence will be needed. Let me emphasise again that the purpose of bringing sub-seabed disposal within the Bill is not to permit it, but to make it subject to control pending a decision in the London dumping convention. I also said in Committee that I thought an order-making power might be the best way to deal with this subject. However, I am now satisfied that the powers flowing from this amendment are very broad and that they are all we would need to put into effect any regulatory framework elaborated under the LDC. I therefore believe that these amendments deal with all of the concerns voiced during Committee, and I commend them to the House.

Dr. David Clark: We have returned to our bi-partisan approach. I congratulate the Minister. It is agreeable to find him proposing this group of amendments so, as he said, ably drafted by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John), who is such an expert at this. As the House is aware, he has a long history of drafting suitable amendments, some of which will stand the test of time and others that I dare not mention.

Some of the amendments add to the Bill. The crucial point, as the Minister has so correctly said, is the reference to the sub-seabed. Since the Oslo and London conventions and the Dumping at Sea Act 1974, technology has moved quickly. Occasionally, it is worth while stopping to remember that. When those conventions and the Dumping at Sea Bill were drafted we did not have the marine technology of oil exploration which we now have.

That technology, coupled with the nuclear waste disposal problem, have made people question the possibility of emplacing nuclear waste under the seabed. That was an argument that we advanced in Committee and we are pleased that the Government have accepted it. It

is feasible to emplace waste under the seabed. The Minister has now taken the power to grant, or refuse, licences, as he put it.

As we understood it, without this group of amendments there was nothing to stop oil companies drilling a hole under the seabed and emplacing waste therein. This group of amendments is essential. I am sure that the House will agree to them. Companies such as Ensec are pressing ahead. They may be right. It is not for us to judge. It is right that we explore every method of disposing of nuclear waste—even those suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) with which not everyone agrees. It is a problem that will not go away.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), who is not present, made an interesting speech about nuclear waste disposal on an earlier amendment. There is a problem. Even if we decommissioned all our nuclear plants tomorrow, we would have to treat our nuclear waste. The onus is upon us all to find a suitable solution.

I should like to ask the Minister whether he has anything to add that is consequent upon the Holliday report. I understand that since the report was made there has been a meeting between the Secretary of State for the Environment—at which I understand the Parliamentary Secretary was present—and representatives of the TUC. At that meeting, which I understand was very cordial——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That at this day's sitting the Food and Environment Protection Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Dr. Clark: I understand that arising out of that meeting there were to be further tests and investigations into the problem of the disposal of nuclear waste. It may be that the Minister has nothing to tell us, but if he has it will be useful in discussing the amendments tonight. The Minister shakes his head, but perhaps before too long he will be able to respond.

With those few words of welcome, we greatly approve of the Government's action in moving the amendment, and I commend it to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 12, in page 7, line 27, after 'sea', insert

'or under the sea-bed'.

No. 13, in page 7, line 34, leave out 'in the sea within British fishery limits' and insert

'within British fishery limits either in the sea or under the sea-bed'.

No. 14, in page 8, line 3, at end insert—

'*(cc)* for the deposit of substance or articles anywhere under the sea-bed within British fishery limits from a vehicle which was loaded in the United Kingdom with any of those substances or articles;'.

No. 15, in page 8, line 18, after 'sea', insert

'or under the sea-bed'.

No. 16, in page 8, line 18, at end insert—

'*(ee)* for the loading of a vehicle in the United Kingdom with substance or articles for deposit from that vehicle as mentioned in paragraph *(a)* or *(cc)* above;'.—*[Mr. MacGregor.]*

Clause 8

LICENCES

Dr. David Clark: I beg to move amendment No. 17, in page 9, line 19 at end insert

'and *(c)* shall consider any written representations from a person objecting to the issue of that licence'.

As the Minister has reminded us, the control of pollution at sea caused by dumping and incineration is done, under the various conventions, by the issue of licences. Clause 8 lays down the criteria that a licensing authority must take into account when determining whether to issue a licence. Among the matters that the licensing authority has to take into account is the need

"to protect the marine environment, the living resources which it supports . . . and . . . to prevent interference with legitimate uses of the sea"—

which I presume includes fishing and certain scientific activities. The clause also says that a licensing authority

"may have regard to such other matters as the authority considers relevant."

We felt that a further condition should be for the right of written representation. There may be other people who have an interest in the granting or refusal of a licence, and it is only right that they should be able to make their representation in the same manner as with a land planning application. Obviously, I am not arguing that exactly the same criteria should apply to the maritime environment as to the land environment, but there is a principle that should be taken into account.

The House might be forgiven for imagining that the point is covered by schedule 3 to the Bill as schedule 3 is entitled "Licences — Right to make Representations, etc." But the right applies only to the licence holder or the would-be licence holder. That is how I read the schedule. Indeed, when it was put to the Minister in Committee, I think that that was also his reading of it.

Other interested parties should have the right to put their point of view, which would be considered together with other points of view and the other information taken into account by a licensing authority in determining whether to issue a licence.

Surely it is not too much to ask that, if someone believes that he has a legitimate interest which may be affected, he has the right to be heard. He may be a fisherman, a fish farmer whose living may depend on the susceptibilities of the quality of the water or tide, a shipper, a marine scientist or someone who wishes to challenge the scientific assertions on which the application is made.

The amendment speaks for itself and, therefore, I shall not go into great detail. Clearly, a matter of principle is involved, and in that spirit I move amendment No. 17.

Mr. MacGregor: This is an interesting amendment, and I shall attempt to speak as briefly to it as did the hon. Gentleman. I am glad to have the opportunity of explaining the Government's position on representations from the public, which the amendment allows.

Clause 8 already requires the licensing authority to consider certain matters and gives it power to consider any others which are relevant. The terminology may have led to some misunderstanding on the question of representations. Indeed, we discussed this in Committee. Let us suppose that an individual or organisation has written in with relevant information of which the licensing authority

[Mr. MacGregor]

was unaware. The authority would not only have the power to consider the information, but would be positively irresponsible if it did not do so. Indeed, if the authority refused to consider it, an objector with sufficient interest would have grounds for seeking a judicial review of the authority's decision. The court might then find that the authority had acted unreasonably.

The legal position is, therefore, rather stronger than the bald provisions of the Bill seem to imply. There is virtually a duty and a sanction to ensure that the licensing authority considers well-founded objections. Why, then, do I not accept the amendment? There are many difficulties.

First, the amendment talks only about objections. In the context of the sort of controversial applications over which objections may arise, it is possible that other interests would express support for the application. An evenhanded provision would have required any well-founded view to be required. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman referred to schedule 3, but it gives certain rights to make representations after a licence has been issued, whereas the amendment talks about representations before a licence is issued.

Moreover, one often wants to deal with these matters speedily. To have a complex representational system, which would have to go beyond what is in the amendment, could delay many applications. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have scientific and other advisers who advise us on these licences.

Finally, the Dumping at Sea Act 1974 has been on the statute book for 11 years. The absence of a provision on public representation has not been raised until now, nor was it commented on during consultations on the Bill. In Committee I was asked whether there was any evidence that the lack of such a provision had caused problems. I have examined that carefully and I have never received a complaint or an objection. Therefore, the area does not seem to be creating problems.

I am grateful for the short debate, and I hope that I have demonstrated that we are able to listen to objections, just as we can listen to other representations on an application.

Dr. David Clark: I am considerably reassured by the Minister's explanation. We accept his assurance that there is a duty on the licensing authority to take into account other viewpoints and, therefore, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. MacGregor: I beg to move amendment No. 18, in page 9, line 19 at end insert—

'(1A) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) above, where it appears to a licensing authority that an applicant for a licence has applied for the licence with a view to the disposal of the substances or articles to which it would relate, the authority, in determining whether to issue a licence, shall have regard to the practical availability of any alternative methods of dealing with them.'.

The amendment places a duty on the licensing authority to consider the practical availability of alternatives to dumping. The key word is "practical", which also featured in the Opposition amendment and the dumping conventions, to which I shall refer shortly. The end result is that the authority will look at practical alternatives—it will not have regard to theoretical ones. I could have given several examples, but, as the hour is late, I shall give only one, which relates to dredgings. For the most part, these are marine sediments and there is no practical alternative to the sea route.

The hon. Members for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and Pontypridd (Mr. John) will recognise that the amendment is a slightly changed version of one which they tabled in Committee, and which I undertook to consider. As I explained then, the duty to consider alternative means of disposal, treatment or elimination is a requirement under the conventions, and, as such, it is a factor that we always take into account where it is relevant, but I am happy to see it in the Bill.

In redrafting the hon. Gentlemen's amendment we have spelt out the circumstances where it will be relevant—when the purpose of the deposit is disposal. That is the extent of the convention's control, but we license deposits that are not made for disposal, such as piers or breakwaters. For those operations, alternatives are not relevant. The original amendment said, "where appropriate", but we have been a little more specific. I hope the hon. Gentleman will agree that this new, slightly improved version meets the point that the Opposition made in Committee.

The amendment strikes the right balance. There is now a duty, not just a power, to consider alternatives. We accept that it is sensible, but the licensing authority will have to regard to what is practical. This should help to ensure that waste disposal decisions take full account of the environment as a whole.

Dr. David Clark: I welcome the amendment, which will be a useful weapon in our armoury for the best practical environmental option approach that we are trying to follow with regard to sea dumping. The amendment will be much more important than may be suggested by the time that we have allocated to it this evening. I have already mentioned the fact that, in the eyes of others, Britain treats its surrounding seas differently from them. Often, we do so on the grounds of custom and ease. Customs must change with technology and science. Ease must be changed by considering alternative means of disposal.

The amendment, which states that the licensing authority

"shall have regard to the practical availability of any alternative methods of dealing with them",

is a major step forward in changing our approach to the disposal of waste at sea and, in that sense, I welcome it.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 11

POWERS OF OFFICERS

Amendment made: No. 19, in page 13, line 20 after 'sea', insert 'or under the sea-bed'. *[Mrs. Fenner.]*

Clause 13

DUTY OF LICENSING AUTHORITY TO KEEP REGISTER OF LICENCES

Amendment made: No. 20, in page 14, line 6 leave out 'or(e)' and insert '(cc), (e) or (ee)'. *[Mrs. Fenner.]*

Further consideration of the Bill adjourned.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

To be further considered tomorrow.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 11th June, Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Hurd relating to the draft Historic Churches (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 with the substitution of half-past Twelve o'clock or two and a half hours after it has been entered upon whichever is the later, for the provisions in paragraph 1*(b)* of the Standing Order.—[*Mr. Peter Lloyd.*]

Belgian Sanitaryware

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Peter Lloyd.*]

10.13 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): When the United Kingdom joined the European Community, it did so in a spirit of support for the principle of free trade. That principle continues to be a fundamental part of the philosophy of the Conservative party and of the Government, which is exactly as it should be. However, in some areas, the principle is being exploited by our Community partners. There are numerous examples of such exploitation which leave British firms at a great disadvantage compared with their European competitors, simply because Britain obeys the rules and the spirit of our free trade agreements whereas others in Europe do not operate with the same honesty and openness.

One example of such an imbalance in the environment and level of support between a British producer and its European competitors is in sanitaryware. This has been drawn to my attention by the firm Twyfords, which employs about 750 people in Alsager in my constituency, and a further 1,100 people, many of them locally in Stoke-on-Trent and its surrounding areas. I am delighted to see in their places tonight my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle), who has done much to forward the case of the industry recently, and my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who has supported the industry since he came to the House some time ago.

The name of Twyfords has come to be associated with a British-made product of high quality which is so much is demand that between 25 and 30 per cent. of the firm's products are exported, thereby making a major contribution to our balance of trade. Twyfords is one of the largest United Kingdom producers of sanitaryware, and one of the few manufacturing firms that can boast that virtually all of its raw materials are of domestic origin.

The firm is obviously a major customer for the British clay industry, as well as being a major consumer of gas and coal. In addition, it is a major source of work for the glaze manufacturing industry. In short, Twyfords is a firm producing a high quality product using domestic materials, exporting many of its finished goods, employing many people and thereby making a major contribution to our economy.

The firm is competitive and has to compete very effectively to survive in the world-renowned British sanitaryware market. Therefore, it is essential that the spirit of competitiveness is preserved on a fair and open basis. However, there is a major threat to the free trade environment within the industry. The threat comes from Belgian producers, notably the firm Boch SA, now reconstituted as Noviboch.

Figures show that imports of sanitaryware from Belgium have risen from 92 tonnes in 1979 to 2,300 tonnes last year. That is a staggering increase in value from £88,700 in 1979 to £2·9 million. Such figures should cause us to look into the issue. In few sectors have imports from one country increased 25-fold in volume in such a short period.

In the light of these worrying figures, the British ceramic sanitaryware industry viewed with caution the

[Mrs. Ann Winterton]

taking of a stake in the firm of Boch SA by the Belgian Government. This caution was shared by the European Commission in 1982, when it recorded:

"The Commission considers that the taking by the Belgium Government of a capital holding valued at 475 million Belgian francs is likely to impair the conditions of trade between the Member States to an extent contrary to the common interests, in view of the difficult situation obtaining in that industry in the Community."

The Commission invited comments on that matter, and following representations made by the United Kingdom industry with assistance from Mr. Robert Moreland, then a Member of the European Parliament, the Commission reached the decision in February 1983 that

"aid granted by the Belgium Government to a firm manufacturing ceramic sanitaryware is incompatible with the Common Market and must therefore be withdrawn."

The firm referred to was Bock SA of La Louviere. The firm has been making substantial losses for several years, and massive amounts were owed to the Belgian Government for social security payments.

Despite that action by the European Commission, the Belgian Government continued to play a major role in subsidising the costs of Boch SA, to the extent that imports of Belgian sanitaryware nearly doubled between 1982 and 1983. In a letter dated 22 October 1983, Commissioner Andriessen accepted that, contrary to the decisions and rulings of the Commission,

"From publications in the Official Journal of Belgium the Commission has learned that the Belgian authorities have, nevertheless, the intention to grant further aid to the firm of Boch."

As a result of this blatant flouting of the Commission's decision, the Commissioner agreed that the case should be referred to the European Court of Justice. Despite this surge in imports of Belgian sanitaryware, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade declined requests that an emergency quota should be introduced to limit the damage done to the United Kingdom industry until such time as the situation was resolved through the court.

Still further capital for Boch was then underwritten by the Belgian authorities in June 1984, despite the proceedings being taken through the court. The sum involved this time was a further 330 million francs. Of that sum, 104 million francs was released to the firm immediately, of which 44 million francs was to cover the running costs of the company until the end of December last year and 60 million francs to cover the costs of reorganisation in the sanitaryware division. A further 20 million francs went towards a feasibility study related to the work force of the firm, and a similar sum went on the promotion of tableware with a view to diversification. The final 191 million francs was used to meet existing debts.

It is seldom in the rather sorry history of our affairs in Europe that such blatant advantage is taken of Britain's free trade commitment by her competitors and that no action is taken that will realistically and speedily bring to an end such a protectionist practice which jeopardises British trade and British jobs.

In January of this year Boch SA went into liquidation, at a time which was blatantly coincidental with the first date set for the hearing before the European Court and which led to a delay in proceedings until 23 May. A meeting with representatives of the United Kingdom industry on 29 March still resulted in no assurance that any action would be taken by the British Government to give any protection to our domestic manufacturers against such unfair practices.

Our domestic industry, let us be in no doubt, is reeling under this blow from Belgium, and urgent action is necessary immediately. Despite its liquidation in January of this year, the firm of Boch SA was resurrected by the injection of a further £5 million of state aid and is now called Novi Boch.

The delay in court proceedings in Europe has allowed Novi Boch to become fully operational and to cloud the legality of its formation out of Boch SA. It is expected that products from the new firm will be fully available throughout the coming year and that the United Kingdom industry will therefore face still further increases in subsidised imports. The adverse effect of this upon our domestic producers, upon firms such as Twyford, will be very serious and possibly devastating.

The court's recent decision to adjourn the case for still longer leaves our industry under severe attack. I consider that we have not only a right but a duty to take action to prevent this undisguised attack upon our markets by an unfair competitor.

The case has been discussed by Ministers and by Members of this House and of the European Parliament for several years. It has been categorically ruled by the European Commission that the activities of the Belgian Government are in direct contravention of their treaty obligations. But the European Court has continually postponed deliberation of the continued breaches of free trade agreements.

If the court is to refuse to take any real action in this way, we have no alternative but to take unilateral action of our own. I am fully aware that in setting up even temporary trade quotas against imports of Belgian sanitaryware we set precedents which may be followed by other nations. However, I do not accept that we have the right to let British manufacturers and those who depend on them for work to be sacrificed upon the altar of free trade dogma.

The European Commission has shown one that it is a toothless and dumb watchdog of our free trade agreements. The European Court has shown that it is not able to deal quickly or effectively with such blatant transgressions of the principles upon which the European Community is founded. We have no alternative but to make our own stand on this issue and to assert in a forthright manner the interests of our nation and industry. Therefore, I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to take positive action soon. He should put maximum pressure upon the European Commission to get the case before the court as soon as possible. I stress once again that positive action must be taken soon to prevent further deterioration.

10.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. David Trippier): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) upon her initiative in raising this important matter. I am pleased to pay a warm tribute to her for her tenacious stand upon this important subject. Her excellent speech was characteristic of the diligence that she applies to all matters which affect her constituents, and my reply gives me the opportunity to say what the Government have already said direct to the industry: that

justified cause for complaint about imports of subsidised ceramic sanitaryware from Belgium. There is nothing between us on that.

Perhaps I might begin with a brief review of the history, as known to us. We are talking abut one firm, Boch, rather than the entire Belgian ceramic sanitaryware industry. A substantially autonomous Belgian regional authority, not the Belgian Government as such, has repeatedly granted aid to Boch by way of subscriptions of share capital. It has done so without securing clearance from the Commission in advance, as required by the Treaty of Rome. The Commission has opened the treaty procedure for clearing state aids, the so-called article 93(2) procedure, no fewer than three times against successive tranches of this aid. It has reached formal adverse decisions under the first two procedures. In each instance it has required the aid to be withdrawn.

Belgium has complied with neither decision. In the former instance, in February 1984 the Commission instituted proceedings before the European Court of Justice against Belgium for failing to comply with its decision. That case has yet to be heard. I shall return to that point later. In the latter instance, Belgium has just instituted proceedings before the European court against the European Commission to have the Commission's decision declared void. The Commission has not yet taken a decision on the third article 93(2) procedure.

Boch was put into liquidation earlier this year, as my hon. Friend has rightly said, but a new company, Noviboch, was set up, with yet more state aid, to take over Boch's ceramic sanitaryware business. Our expectation is that the Commission will open a fourth article 93(2) procedure in respect of that subscription of capital. While this has been going on, imports from Belgium have indeed, as my my hon. Friend said, risen many fold—twice as fast as imports from the rest of the Community. As a result, British manufacturers have had to reduce prices markedly.

We believe that our industry can rightly complain, first, that aid has repeatedly been granted without the prior clearance required by the treaty; secondly, that the Commission's adverse decisions have not been respected; and, thirdly, that in consequence it has had to contend, for what is now a substantial period, with the deleterious effects of subsidised imports from Belgium.

It is a matter of great regret to us all that the Commission has not acted more quickly as well as more effectively and that the hearing of the Commission's case against Belgium before the European court has not yet taken place, but as a result of the debate I am prepared to press the Commission to get the case heard as quickly as possible.

This sorry saga also gives us cause for concern on wider grounds. There is no doubt that some state aids are justified. Like other member states, we assist our industry in a variety of ways. The treaty recognises and makes provision for this. However, it is equally clear that state aids can distort competition and disrupt markets.

The concept of a genuinely integrated internal market based on fair competition is central to the Community. Its fuller realisation is a major national priority, and I am confident that my hon. Friend shares that view. Therefore, it is right and very much in our interests that the treaty should provide a system whereby the Commission vets state aids in advance and that the Commission should discharge that responsibility firmly, even-handedly and effectively. It must also be a cause of concern to us if that system is seen not to be working.

Reverting to the immediate issue, my hon. Friend is naturally interested in what the Government have done and in what they intend to do. We are concerned with trade within the Community. Therefore, the question of anti-dumping legislation does not arise, any more than it does for trade between England and Scotland. Nor would it be helpful to think of countervailing action outside the terms of the treaty. I can tell my hon. Friend what would happen if we adopted that course; the relevant part of the treaty is an integral part of our national law and our action could be challenged and struck down in our own courts; the outcome would be that the Commission would be pursuing us, rather than the Belgians, for taking the law into our own hands.

It is the state aid provisions of the treaty to which we need to turn and we must remember that, as I have said, responsibility for enforcement in this area rests with the Commission.

I have spoken of the various article 93(2) procedures that the Commission has opened. On each occasion, we have exercised the right that we share with all interested parties—including our industry—to make representations to the Commission about the state aid in question. We have made quite clear our concern about the effect of this aid on competition, on trade within the Community, and, particularly, on our industry.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade has raised the issue with his Belgian colleague. My hon. Friend will understand if I say that the Belgian authorities can be in no doubt about our views.

My right hon. Friend has also raised the issue on several occasions with Commissioner Sutherland, who has particular responsibility within the Commission for these matters. Mr. Sutherland is equally clear about our views. I think that I can also fairly say that he fully understands and shares our concern, and that he is determined to do all that he can to secure effective Commission action. We shall, of course, continue to take similar action whenever appropriate and as the opportunity arises. However, we take such a serious view of this case that we are anxious to go further where we can.

My hon. Friend will recall my saying that the Belgians had instituted proceedings before the European court against the Commission to have its second adverse decision declared void. In normal circumstances, we would take the view that it was for the Commission to defend its decision, and that we should not involve ourselves. But these are not normal circumstances. On this occasion we are taking a different stance. I can tell my hon. Friend that, last week, we applied to the European court to intervene in that case in support of the Commission.

Our objective in taking that course of action is to let it be seen publicly within the Community that the Belgian actions are not acceptable to us and that British industry should not be damaged by illegally subsidised imports from Boch.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing this important matter to the attention of the House.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): On behalf of my constituents, I am glad to be able to support the case made by my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs.

[Mr. John Heddle]

Winterton). I was pleased to hear from the Minister that, after several attempts by colleagues in the European Parliament and hon. Friends in this House, legal action is at last to be initiated in the Community.

Bearing in mind that Boch in the United Kingdom went into voluntary liquidation 17 or 18 months ago, when does my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary expect the legal action to be taken? The news will encourage my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton who are suffering from the decision by the Belgian authorities.

Mr. Trippier: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) said. I understand that court proceedings would have been held later this year. I am suggesting that that is too long to wait. As a result of what my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton has said, I am prepared to intervene this week as, I am sure, will be my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade, in the hope of bringing these proceedings speedily to the court's attention. I hope that the matter will be dealt with effectively.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty five minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 11 June 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL

Order for consideration read.
To be considered tomorrow.

KING'S COLLEGE LONDON BILL [*Lords*]

As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (TROWSE BRIDGE) BILL [*Lords*]

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Crown Immunity

1. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about removing Crown immunity from workplaces covered by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act; and what consideration he has given to the matter.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): The General Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union has sent my right hon. Friend a report on this subject. This followed our meeting with the trade union, the right hon. Member and other right hon. and hon. Members on 17 April. We have asked the Health and Safety Commission for its considered view of the case set out in the report.

Mr. Ashley: I welcome that request to the Health and Safety Commission. However, is the Minister aware that Crown immunity protects from criminal prosecution so-called Crown institutions, such as hospitals, when they break the law under the Health and Safety Acts and that this is gravely damaging to patients? Can he give one good reason why a hospital which food-poisons its patients should be immune from prosecution when a hotel which food-poisons its visitors can be prosecuted?

Mr. Bottomley: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the food hygiene regulations are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. I cannot give him a good reason, but I can give him a true reason. It took two years, from 1977 to 1979, for the Labour Government to take no action. I therefore believe that we are pursuing the right course in asking the commission for its advice, and we shall then consider the advice that it gives.

Mr. Gregory: Does my hon. Friend realise that hon. Members on both sides of the House feel that inactivity in this regard is quite shameful? Frankly, the deaths from food poisoning at the Stanley Royd hospital in Wakefield cannot be tolerated. At present, patients going into hospital face possible danger. However, there is no question of environmental health officers being entitled to go into hospitals—they go in by invitation. I therefore urge my hon. Friend seriously to hold talks so that Crown immunity is stripped away to ensure that patients enjoy the same privileges as they do if they dine in a hotel or restaurant.

Mr. Bottomley: As I have said, we shall give serious consideration to the advice for which we have asked. Although there are differences between Crown and non-Crown premises, there is a shadow procedure for Crown notices similar to statutory notices, which ought to have a great effect.

Disabled Persons

2. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he is satisfied with the operation of the quota system for the employment of disabled people.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Alan Clark): The Government have been concerned for some time about the working of the quota scheme. I have recently received from the Manpower Services Commission a report on the scheme by a working group representing all interested parties. I am now considering its advice and recommendations.

Mrs. Clwyd: As only 30 per cent. of employers reach the 3 per cent. quota, will the Minister use the code of practice on the employment of disabled people as a means of strengthening the quota? If the code of practice does not work, will he give statutory backing to it?

Mr. Clark: As the House knows, the hon. Lady has long and valuable experience of this subject. From our evidence to the all-party disablement group six weeks ago, she will be aware that the principal difficulty is the reluctance of disabled people to register. However, the DROs in the employment service are doing their best to persuade employers the advantages of employing disabled people. I am glad to say that this is reflected in the figures for placings, which have gone up from 69,000 to 71,000 against an extremely disappointing general employment background. We hope that this trend will continue. If it does not, and in the light of research which the special MSC report recommends, we shall consider what further action to take.

Mr. Holt: I am delighted that my hon. Friend is at last beginning to tackle the problem. What does he intend to do about the certification of exemption, which is all too readily available to employers? Does he agree that the regulations for exemptions should be much stricter and stiffer?

Mr. Clark: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point. The reluctance of disabled people to register means that only 32,000 registered disabled people are eligible and available for the quota scheme, so, even if every one of them were taken into employment, the total would still be less than half that required by the Act.

Mr. Boyes: Does the Minister agree that Government Departments could set a good example by fulfilling the

quota themselves? Is he aware that data made available earlier this year show that only five out of 44 Government Departments reached the 3 per cent. quota, and that, even more disgracefully, the DHSS, which ought to be well above the quota, accounts for only 1·5 per cent.? Will the Minister ask his colleagues to do something about that?

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right. The Government should set an example. As I have explained, the sheer mathematics of the problem makes it virtually impossible to comply, but I take his point about the poor figures for the majority of Government Departments. I have written to them once about this and I shall be writing again. I am glad to say that by Department has the best record of all with a figure of 2·5 per cent.

Trade Unions (Postal Voting)

3. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now introduce legislation to make compulsory the use of postal voting in ballots for trade union political funds.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Tom King): No, Sir.

Mr. Meadowcroft: If the Secretary of State will not go so far as legislation, will he at least authorise the certification officer to grant exemption from postal balloting based on the case put to him by individual unions?

Mr. King: The rules have been agreed by the House and the ballots are now taking place. One has been a fully postal ballot; two have been conducted on a part workplace and part postal basis. I am encouraged by reports of the efforts being made to conduct the ballots in the appropriate way. The House will remember this in the future and will expect the same standards to be observed by all unions.

Mr. Cockeram: Does my right hon. Friend accept that irregular and corrupt practices regularly take place in union elections, not just in relation to political funds, but in the election of union officers and when strike decisions are taken at mass meetings? Does he agree that it is time those practices were brought to a halt in the interests of the average union member?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend helpfully supported legislation which has effectively outlawed mass meetings and removed immunity from them. We welcome the procedure increasingly being followed in any question of strike or industrial action whereby there must be a secret ballot if immunity is to be retained. That is a most important and successful reform.

Mr. Golding: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the ballots on political funds that have taken place so far have been extremely successful, not just in their results, but in the way in which they have been conducted? Is he further aware that more discussion and interest is shown by trade union members in workplace ballots than in postal ballots, as the turnout figures show?

Mr. King: I confirm that my information is that in the one fully postal ballot the turnout was 20 per cent., whereas in the two part workplace and part postal ballots the figures were 57 per cent. and 67 per cent. Despite all the opposition from Labour Members about monstrous and impossible impositions on trade unions, I note and welcome the observance of our legislation by the unions. We shall note the efforts made to ensure fair balloting, and we shall expect that to be the practice in all future ballots in the interests of union members.

Mr. Merchant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that far too much money is donated to and by trade unions without ballots and proper consultation? Was that not illustrated last weekend by the unfortunate donation of £16,000 by the rock star, Bruce Springsteen, to support miners who were sacked during the strike, which probably also illustrates a lack of proper consideration and advice?

Mr. King: With regard to the legislation and the steps that are being taken, I welcome the important development that if a ballot for political funds is conducted, and is successful, it is the duty of that union to notify each of its members under the 1930 legislation, which was repeated in the 1984 Act, of their right to contract out of that political fund. If the ballots are to be correctly conducted, the House would expect that step to be implemented.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Secretary of State aware that we do not want lectures from Conservative Members of Parliament, who get money from companies which are members of the CBI—which would not know a ballot if it stared them in the face—and that we do not need hypocrisy from the Liberal party, which has just received the biggest-ever political donation of £188,000 from the British School of Motoring and for which no ballot was conducted? Would it not be a good idea if everyone who has paid through the nose for lessons at the British School of Motoring were given the chance of a ballot to decide whether the Liberal party should have received that money? Is it not the height of hypocrisy?

Mr. King: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has still not learnt the important lesson. As a Member sponsored by a union that must bitterly regret the fact that it did not dare to consult its members before embarking on such a disastrous strike, I should have thought that even he might have begun to understand the merits of ballots.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that postal balloting must be evaluated in the much wider context of an improvement in the general industrial climate? Therefore, will he join me in welcoming the recent decision by British Rail to end the closed shop?

Mr. King: I noted that announcement. My impression was that the closed shop in British Rail ended about two years ago, and I am surprised at the excitement about the announcement. Following our legislation, the British Gas Corporation, the Post Office, British Telecommunications and all the water authorities have notified all their unions that the closed shop is ended.

Mr. Prescott: Will the Secretary of State make it clear that he rejects the scurrilous charges that are made about irregularities in ballots without the production of evidence? If no such evidence is available, we should treat those charges with the contempt that they deserve. Does the Secretary of State accept, after three political fund ballots, that a combination of workplace and postal ballots produces twice as many participants as does a pure postal ballot? Will he make that clear to the Prime Minister, who is considering new legislation for the trade unions in pursuit of her vendetta against them?

Mr. King: It is incredible that, so recently after the serious events in the Transport and General Workers Union, the hon. Gentleman can allege that there are no malpractices in trade union elections. If anything could clearly underline the importance of our legislation and of the emphasis that we have given to fair and secret ballots, those recent events have done so.

Youth Training Scheme

4. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the second year of the youth training scheme.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Peter Morrison): My right hon. Friend and I frequently discuss the progress and development of the youth training scheme with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission, and did so yesterday.

Mr. Sheerman: At one of his meetings, will the Minister of State make sure that he gives a very strong lead on the second year of the youth training scheme? If the second year of YTS is not planned as a proper foundation stone for a real training programme for our young people, YTS and all the Government's temporary training measures will fall totally into disrepute. We must have a foundation stone for real training in the 21st century, not cheap job experience.

Mr. Morrison: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. It is absolutely crucial that the second year of the youth training scheme should be real training, with qualifications at the end of it, so I am delighted to have his support. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that that is precisely what my right hon. Friend and I and the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission are saying.

Mr. Lawler: Following the launch of the Genesis programme, when my hon. Friend sees the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission will he discuss how greater advice and encouragement can be given to trainees to use their skills to set up their own businesses?

Mr. Morrison: My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that the enterprise courses are part of the youth training scheme. I agree that many trainees should consider setting up in business on their own. In fact, that has already happened.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will arrange for equal prominence to be given by his Department in the publication of numbers of people employed at the same time as the release of statistics showing the numbers unemployed.

Mr. Tom King: We seek to give equal emphasis to employment as well as to unemployment, since clearly both statistical series are important to obtain a clear perspective of what is happening in the labour market. The figures are released at different times in the month as soon as they are available.

Mr. Yeo: I share the concern that is felt by all hon. Members about unemployment. Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we were to succeed in securing wider publicity about the number of people employed that would not only recognise the steps that the Government have already taken to create more jobs, but offer some hope in an otherwise rather depressing scene for those who are still unemployed?

Mr. King: I understand my hon. Friend's question. I have been seeking to emphasise that point. Hon. Members know that during the past 18 months there has been a rapid increase in the working population. That has made the task not only of providing more jobs but of reducing unemployment more demanding.

Mr. Leighton: In view of those bullish remarks, does the Secretary of State think that by the time of the next general election there might be a return to the same number of people in employment as there were when the Labour Government left office? If that is too optimistic, does he think that there might be a return to within 1 million of that figure?

Mr. King: The challenge that is being faced not only in this country but in every other country of the Western world is very tough. I have never concealed that fact and I have never sought to put forecasts before the House. I take encouragement from the rapid increase in the number of new jobs being created and from the fact that the most recent forecast of the Confederation of British Industry is the most optimistic for many years. I hope that at last there will be the scale of improvement that every hon. Member wishes to see.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are parts of the country—for example, not far from my own — where the number of jobs available is much greater than the number of people applying for them? Does he also agree that one of the disincentives to people seeking employment in those areas is that it is too easy, for young people in particular, to move into employment which is some kind of cul-de-sac? Can he give an assurance that he is taking that point on board?

Mr. King: There is no doubt that the overall figures show a considerable improvement in the number of vacancies, but I am the first to accept that they are not evenly distributed around the country. In many areas there are frequent complants about skill shortages and the difficulty of getting labour for jobs, but that at least shows that there is an improvement. We hope that the improvement in the economy will help to reinforce it.

Mr. Foot: Since the right hon. Gentleman is so interested in the employment figures as opposed to the unemployment figures, will he now answer the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) and say what were the employment figures in 1979 and what are the employment figures now.

Mr. King: The figures are known to the House. There is a later question on this subject. Between 1979 and March 1983 there was a net fall of about 1·8 million in the employed labour force. Since March 1983 there has been an increase of about 600,000 in the employed labour force.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Liverpool research group estimates that the black economy is now worth about £45 million a year? Does he think that people registered as unemployed are contributing towards that vast sum? If so, what can be done about it?

Mr. King: I am under no illusions. It is a substantial figure. The chairman of the Inland Revenue has on occasions tried to make an estimate of the scale of the black economy. I have no doubt that it is substantial and that some unemployed people are taking advantage of the situation. However, I am well aware that there are many parts of the country with substantial problems of unemployment which are not met by explanations of that kind.

Mr. Penhaligon: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the figures would be more realistic and would give us a better ability to interpret the situation if they included whole-time equivalents?

Mr. King: There is obviously something in that. I have made it clear that there are a number of part-time jobs. However, some hon. Members have an illusion that the increase in the employed labour force, to which I have referred, is entirely part-time. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is an increase in full-time male employment, in full-time female employment, in self-employment and in part-time employment.

Mr. Lilley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is growing interest in the employment figures, for two reasons: first, because the CBI has forecast that by the end of this year there will be 1 million more people in work than there were at the last general election; and, secondly, because of the embarrassment that that will cause to the alliance parties, which, in their manifesto at the last election, said that the biggest increase that could be expected over the same period would be far less than one million jobs - - about 650,000 — if their policies were pursued?

Mr. King: I do not know how much of an embarrassment it would be. I suppose it would depend on how many people actually read their manifesto. I was not aware of the point as stated by my hon. Friend, but I note what he says. Certainly there is considerable optimism about the creation of more jobs. I do not conceal from the House the challenge that we have to face, with the substantial increase in the working population. We may be meeting that challenge better than other countries in Europe, but not well enough to achieve a real reduction in unemployment.

6. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the numbers of people who have been unemployed for over 12 months; and what this is as a percentage of those registered unemployed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: On 11 April 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 1,334,000—41 per cent. of the total.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister recollect that in April 1980, 334,000 people, or 23 per cent. of the total, had been unemployed for more than 52 weeks? Is he aware that eminently respectable people, such as Hywel Jones, director of the Henley Centre for Forecasting, have estimated that unemployment will continue to rise year by year until the end of the century? Will the hon. Gentleman look at the facts of the case rather than at dogmatism and produce a policy for employment?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman should recall that at the time to which he refers the community enterprise programme was in existence and had 30,000 places. Since then, under the community programme for the long-term unemployed, that has been expanded to 130,000 places. Now, with the Chancellor's announcement in the Budget, it has been increased to 230,000 places. That is a practical example of what the Government are doing and how we care for the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Forman: As the most notable aspect of the plight of the long-term unemployed is their lack of any formal or educational qualifications, will my hon. Friend pay close attention in any extension of the community programme to the training content of the programme and the prospects for remedial education?

Mr. Morrison: That is precisely what we are doing. As my hon. Friend is probably aware, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has announced that about 50,000 places in the programme will have a training element.

Mr. Evans: Does the Minister agree with the Prime Minister's weekend statement that there will still be about 3 million people unemployed at the time of the next general election? Do not the figures mean that the overwhelming majority of over-50s who are currently classified as long-term unemployed have no reasonable chance of a full-time job so long as the Conservatives remain in office?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman has probably seen the outturn statistics for the community programme.

Ms. Clare Short: What do they show?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Lady is right to ask. They show that one in three get a job and that their opportunity of getting a job is greatly enhanced as a result of the community programme, which, as I explained, has been expanded substantially by the Chancellor's Budget proposals.

Mr. Cyril Smith: The Minister has told us that there are now 1,200,000 fewer people employed than there were in 1979. How many of those who have been unemployed for more than 12 months are young people who, training schemes apart, have never had a job?

Mr. Morrison: I cannot cite the precise statistics. The hon. Gentleman has rightly put his finger on a key area. Many of the 21 to 24-year olds did not have the opportunity offered by a youth training scheme. If the last Labour Government had bitten the bullet in 1978, those people would have had that opportunity. Because of that lack of action, their position has been made rather more difficult.

Young Persons (Langbaurgh)

7. **Mr Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make further arrangements to cater for the high unemployment rate amongst young people in the Langbaurgh region in view of the fact that the youth training scheme will not be available to all those eligible in the area.

Mr. Alan Clark: There has been no shortage of places in the Langbaurgh area under the present youth training scheme; and young people there will benefit substantially from the expansion of the scheme.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the reassurance that, despite the rumours in the area, there will

not be a shortfall. The major consideration is, however, about the national average of a 60 per cent. take-up of full-time employment after YTS is completed. In Langbaurgh the figure is about 20 per cent., or even less, despite the hard work of the staff. What encouragement will there be for young people to embark upon YTS for one year if their chance of obtaining full-time employment following that scheme is less than 20 per cent.?

Mr. Clark: The rumours to which my hon. Friend refers are always regrettable because they lead to a great deal of disillusionment and to uncertainty about whether it is worth going on to the scheme. I am glad that my hon. Friend welcomes the expansion of the scheme and the fact that the number of places provided for in Langbaurgh is larger than the number of projected applicants. Subsequent entry into employment must necessarily depend upon the level of economic activity where the scheme is situated. The scheme's extension to two years has been widely welcomed. The extension will give a higher level of skills and training to those participating in the scheme and will further enhance their employment prospects.

Wages Councils

9. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received any further representations regarding the proposal to abolish or reform wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Lofthouse: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that there is little evidence that the abolition of the wages councils will create any real jobs? Does the hon. Gentleman not think that the Government would be better occupied in creating real and lasting jobs than in destroying the wages councils, which action will remove the protection for all trained workers?

Mr. Bottomley: No, Sir. I take this opportunity to point out that the movement of wages and costs, especially unit labour costs, throughout the economy makes a very substantial difference.

Mr. Favell: Has my hon. Friend read the recent survey of members of the Institute of Directors, which showed that 54 per cent. of those interviewed would employ more people if wages councils were abolished?

Mr. Bottomley: I am delighted to hear that. Most of those members already have the opportunity of doing that because they do not all operate in wages council industries.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: Are statistics available for each travel-to-work area giving the number of people covered by wages council awards?

Mr. Bottomley: I think that the answer is no.

Mr. John Townend: Does my hon. Friend agree that, if the United States had had wages councils, it would not have been able to create 10 million new jobs during the past 10 years? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Bottomley: I wish that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) would stop answering my questions for me. As she has rightly pointed out, the United States has a national minimum wage. It is important to start looking at the real effects of minimum wage legislation, how it operates in this country and the age groups it most affects.

Mr. Barron: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm, or deny, that his Department is thinking about attacking the minimum wages paid to people under 21 so that their wages will be about the level paid to people under youth training schemes?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman should pay a little attention to the motives and success of the people in the electrical contracting industry, who freely negotiated a reduction in the starting pay and raised the number taking part in traineeships by three times in 18 months. So, the simple answer to his question is no.

Mr. Nicholls: If evidence is being called for, is my hon. Friend aware of the work done by Mr. Stanley Siebert of Birmingham university, who has estimated that there are about 230,000 jobs lost for teenagers because of the minimum wage structure established by the wages councils?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes. The important thing is to put people on the bottom rungs on the ladder and ensure that more have a chance to move up the ladder.

Ms. Clare Short: Given the large number of press leaks that we saw over the weekend, will the Minister tell the House what the Cabinet decided last week—if the Secretary of State has told him? Will the Minister confirm that it means that the current consultation is something of a sham? In reply to a large number of representations it was said that the system should not be weakened in any way. Those assurances have obviously been ignored because of the Cabinet's decision to legislate in the next Session either to weaken or to abolish the wages council system.

Mr. Bottomley: The difficulty in answering the hon. Lady is that hers is the only question to which she does not give the answer. The only person to whom I offered advice wrote an article that was exactly the opposite of what I said.

Mr. Cockeram: Will my hon. Friend accept that one of the defects of wages councils is the abnormally high rate fixed for school leavers, usually 60 per cent. of the rate for an adult trained worker, and that that precludes the employment of many school leavers?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes. It is worth recognising that most school leavers, or people of school leaving age, face four choices. They can stay on at school, getting no income whatever; they can try to get one of the jobs that are available, in a wages council industry or some other industry, at a fairly high rate of pay; they can stay on in education, at a college of further education, where they get less money; or they can use the youth training schemes, where they can get training to make them better qualified for employment. It is better to make sure that the wages that they get in wages council industries are not so high as to stop most of them getting their feet on the bottom rungs of the ladder and moving upwards.

Labour Statistics

11. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Employment, on the latest available figures, what is the total number of unemployed under the age of 25 years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: On 11 April 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom under 25 years of age was 1,213,000.

Mr. Fatchett: Does the Minister realise the depressing nature of that figure? Have not the Government, through their economic policies, written off a large proportion of the generation under the age of 25? When will the Government act on their behalf? What hope can there be for those people in the future if there is continuation of the same miserable policies?

Mr. Morrison: As I said in answer to a previous question, the Government have not written off the 18 to 25-year-olds. The Government have expanded the community programme to almost double its size. As the hon. Member will be aware, about half of the people on that programme are under 25.

Sir Dudley Smith: Is it not time that we had a significant drive to get more young people to take jobs in the service industries? In view of the high unemployment figures, is it not ludicrous that restaurants and hotels throughout the country are staffed almost exclusively by foreigners?

Mr. Morrison: I agree in part with what my hon. Friend said. There are many opportunities available in hotels, restaurants and the retail industry. As he will no doubt know, there are large numbers of youth training scheme places aimed at precisely those parts of the economy.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister know that, as the end of another school year approaches, the prospects for school leavers throughout the country—certainly in my constituency in Leicester—are very bleak indeed, and that many of their school friends who left at the end of the last school year are still unable to find jobs? The youth training scheme may be admirable, but it is no substitute for a job.

Mr. Morrison: As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows well, in Leicester, as in other parts of the country, every one of this year's school leavers will have the opportunity of taking part in a quality youth training scheme. That is more than ever happened under the last Labour Administration.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: One regrets the large number of unemployed people under the age of 25, but is my hon. Friend aware that in the city of Leicester, because of a dispute within NALGO, the community programme has not been agreed as an agency agreement with the city council, and that, therefore, 400 jobs cannot be confirmed? Will my hon. Friend arrange for the jobcentres to publicise the number of jobs going begging, numbering about 1,600 in Leicester? If those jobs were filled, it would reduce the number of unemployed and would be of help to the rest of the country.

Mr. Morrison: As my hon. Friend will know, I am aware that NALGO in Leicester has, for the moment, not approved the community programme. One must, therefore, assume that it is not worried about the long-term unemployed. At present I am looking into that matter.

12. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of those in employment are in full-time work; and what the proportion was in May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The labour force survey conducted in the spring of 1984 found that 79 per cent. of employees regarded themselves as working full time. That compares with 82 per cent. in the survey conducted in the spring of 1979.

Mr. Haynes: Does the Minister realise that that reply and those figures mean that there is a growth in part-time employment, which means that there are fewer full-time employees? Is he further aware that those part-time employees are represented in the main by the council—I mean, by wages councils? Bearing in mind that the Government have a policy to abolish wages councils, is the Minister aware that bosses and employers will walk all over those people? It is obviously a typical Tory party policy.

Mr. Clark: I am certain that the House will feel that the hon. Gentleman's question lost nothing in the brief interval during which he rehearsed his punchline. If he examines the figures, he will see that the difference between 1979 and 1982 is small. Indeed, the proportion has hardly altered. There is nothing disreputable about part-time work. It is generally accepted that future patterns of employment in industrial societies will include an element of job-sharing and splitting, and flexible early retirement. Government policies and special employment measures are directed towards that.

Skillcentres

13. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently attending skillcentres; and what were the figures for 1984 and 1983.

Mr. Peter Morrison: During April 1985, the latest month for which information is available, on average 8,800 people attended skillcentres at any one time. For April 1984 and April 1983 the numbers were about 10,600 and 12,100 respectively. Overall, however, skillcentres plan to train 35,000 adults in 1985-86 compared with 33,000 in 1984-85 and 31,000 in 1983-84.

Mr. Atkinson: Does the Minister recollect the words of the Secretary of State, who recently said that the shortage of skill in Britain represented a time bomb which, if not remedied, would blow the whole economy to pieces? Why, then, has he changed his mind and decided to keep open only two skillcentres out of all those that have been closed? The two that have been re-opened are in Twickenham and Southampton, and members of the Conservative party in those two areas knew that their centres would remain open before the Minister announced publicly the new decision.

Mr. Morrison: I recollect well what my right hon. Friend said about skill shortages. Surely the hon. Gentleman was not listening to my answer. I pointed out that in the year ahead 35,000 people would be trained in skillcentres, compared with 31,000 in 1983-84. Furthermore, thanks to the rejigged adult training strategy, 250,000 people will be trained next year, as opposed to 125,000 in the past year.

Mr. Baldry: Does my hon. Friend agree that it does not matter whether the physical building is called a skillcentre, a technical college or a training centre; what matters is the quantity, quality and cost-effectiveness of the training?

Mr. Morrison: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. That is precisely why the adult training strategy has been adopted.

Mr. Sheerman: Will the Minister come clean and accept that the so-called re-jigging hides the fact that throughout the country short-term "cheapo" courses are being substituted for genuine year-long skills training in our skillcentres? Is it not a surprise that the two skillcentres that the Minister has saved are in Tory marginal seats? Is he aware that men and women in other areas will take that lesson hard, they having had their skill-training opportunities taken away from them?

Mr. Morrison: The decision as to which skillcentres to keep was made entirely by the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission. The hon. Gentleman will know that the leader of the CSU pleaded with the chairman of the MSC to retain the Southampton skillcentre. He will know also that it was the Labour-controlled council which guaranteed money for the Southampton centre. Those are the facts.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. John Townend** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I was present at Victoria station to meet President de la Madrid of Mexico at the beginning of his state visit to this country. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall be attending a state banquet given by Her Majesty the Queen in honour of President de la Madrid.

Mr. Townend: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the growing resentment in the country over the activities of the European Court of Human Rights? Is it right that a court dominated by foreign judges should dictate who enters Britain, should prevent naughty schoolchildren from being caned and should discuss the future of Myra Hindley? Is it not time that these decisions were brought back to the House and the Government? Will my right hon. Friend give notice that we shall terminate our membership and recognition of this body?

The Prime Minister: I can understand why my hon. Friend feels deeply about some of the judgments that have been given. However, we have signed that declaration and we must abide by its rules. The court held, for example, that the immigration rules applying to the admission of husbands had the legitimate aim of protecting the domestic labour market. It is worth noting that Myra Hindley has tried previously to get her case before the European Court and has failed. It was ruled inadmissible.

Mr. Steel: Will the Prime Minister join me in deploring the concentration of television interviewers and Conservative Central Office on something called the TBW factor? Does she agree that it is merely a pathetic excuse for the failures of the Government's economic and social policies?

The Prime Minister: I note that the right hon. Gentleman cannot find a more effective and more important supplementary question than that.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the victory of Barry McGuigan was a great victory and one which symbolised the capacity of the different communities in Northern Ireland to live together when they have the will to do so?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend and I congratulate the winner most warmly. We are all delighted at the reception that he received in both parts of Ireland.

Q2. **Mr. Evans** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: How many people will have to pay increased national insurance and pension charges if the state earnings-related pension scheme is abolished, which apparently the right hon. Lady is determined to do?

The Prime Minister: Any increases will be nothing like those that would have had to be paid had SERPS continued. There will be a certain number of increases, because SERPS will continue until the end of the century for those who are entitled to it. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the money that is paid out in pensions this year has to be met by contributions, a factor which I wish he would remember more often.

Mr. Crouch: Is my right hon. Friend aware that if she decides to intervene in the current moves to find a peace settlement in the middle east she will have the wholehearted support of the House, and no one will criticise her for visiting Cairo, Amman and other centres in that area, or suggest that she should take a holiday instead?

The Prime Minister: We cannot intervene directly, as my hon. Friend knows, but we keep closely in touch with these matters, both with the parties concerned and the United States. I have often been asked to visit Egypt and Jordan as Prime Minister, and by the time that the long recess comes it will be about time that I accepted those kind invitations.

Mr. Kinnock: The right hon. Lady gave an evasive response to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans). Is it not the plain truth and the plain fact that every worker, whether contracted in or contracted out of SERPS, will have to pay more as a consequence of any abolition of the scheme? Why does she not come out and admit that?

The Prime Minister: As long as SERPS carries on, yes, more contributions will have to be paid to meet the liability. The right hon. Gentleman must be well aware that the contributions paid so far towards SERPS are not being accumulated to pay out SERPS but are used to pay out existing basic pensions as well as increments on former graduated pensions that have built up. The situation will be far worse under the system that he proposes. If SERPS were fully in operation for the period in which it was arranged for it to be in operation it would cost £66½ billion, compared with the £15 billion now on the same price terms.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister wants us to forget that not only did she vote for the scheme but that she endorsed it at the last general election. Setting that aside,

how does the abolition of SERPS meet the problems about pensions that are bound to be encountered? We know that contributions are going up because of the right hon. Lady's deliberate act trying to abolish SERPS. Is she now saying that there will be a real cut in pensions in 20 or 30 years' time, and that she favours that? Is the alternative that extra payments will go in extra subscriptions to private pensions, without any particular advantage for anyone now having to pay for pensions?

The Prime Minister: No, and if the right hon. Gentleman read it all carefully, he would find the answers for which he is asking. SERPS goes on, for all those entitled to it, up to the end of the century. The outgoings on SERPS have to be met by incoming contributions. As to beyond the century, the contributions that people will make to new occupational pension schemes will be accumulated and will therefore be there, saved and ready to be paid out. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that Labour's proposals for pensions alone at the last general election would have already added—*[Interruption]*—£10 a week to the national insurance contributions of the working population. The right hon. Gentleman never thinks of the working population, which has to pay for all his promises.

Mr. Kinnock: Why does the Prime Minister never want to talk about her pensions policy now or in the future? What is she trying to evade now? What does she have to hide about the future? Is she in favour of a real cut in pensions in the future simply because she will not bear the obligations, through a state scheme, that people are willing to bear?

The Prime Minister: SERPS could not be delivered, in spite of all the right hon. Gentleman's promises. At the next general election, at any time, I will stand on our record and on our proposals compared with his. He is proposing to quadruple spending on pensions in real terms over the next 50 years, but he is refraining from saying that the majority of his constituents, the working population, will have to pay for his extravagant promises.

Sir William Clark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, when the earnings-related pension scheme was introduced, its actuarial value was far too optimistic? Does she further agree that, whereas the working population is today paying 9 per cent. of its earnings in national insurance contributions, if SERPS were not altered, some 15 per cent. of every worker's gross income would have to be paid out? The working population could not sustain such a burden.

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that the working population could sustain the burden. What is more, the figures on which SERPS was calculated took no account of the number of pensioners after the year 2010, which will now be 3 million higher than the figure taken account of in SERPS.

Mr. Hirst: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to read the bizarre background to the secrets trial currently in progress at the Old Bailey? Can she assure me that when the verdict is announced——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman's question may well be sub judice.

Mr. Hirst: I apologise, Mr. Speaker.

Q3. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fatchett: Has the Prime Minister had an opportunity to read the article prepared by supporters and members of the Federation of Conservative Students, for publication in the Aston university student newspaper? The article is so outrageously offensive that it can even express pleasure at seeing black people die in the fire at Bradford City football ground. Will the Prime Minster repudiate such vile rubbish which comes fom members of her party? Will she take this opportunity to assure the House and the country that that rubbish in the Federation of Conservative Students will be cleaned out? Does she agree that the article represents a true sickness in the FCS?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will send me the evidence that he has to support his assertions——

Mr. Fatchett: I have sent the right hon. Lady a copy.

The Prime Minister: I do not know who prepared the alleged article. I do not know whether the alleged article, which the hon. Gentleman has sent me, was published. Perhaps he will send me supporting evidence for his contentions. If the article was published, that is disgraceful, whoever wrote it.

Q4. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nicholls: Although the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill has now been effectively killed off, the fact remains that the House of Commons has voted overwhelmingly against experimentation on human embryos. As it was possible to deal with surrogacy in isolation, does my right hon. Friend agree that experimentation on human embryos is also a matter that could be dealt with in legislation soon? Does she further agree that, if it is true that we must wait at least two years, and probably longer, for a Government Bill, that would be unacceptable to many hon. Members and reflect grave discredit on the Government?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend said, we introduced a Bill to deal with commercial surrogacy, which we felt had to be dealt with urgently. We intend to bring in a comprehensive Bill with regard to the Warnock proposals as soon as it is practicable. As my hon. Friend said, there will be a good deal of contention about the Warnock proposals and it is as well that that should be resolved before we bring forward a Bill. I am well aware of the strength of views expressed by hon. Members during debates on the Bill introduced by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). Indeed, I share many of those views.

Mr. Cyril Smith: Although I welcome the visit of the President of Mexico, was it really necessary for the streets of London to be snarled up for two hours? Traffic was unable to move and constituents were unable to get into the House. Is it really necessary to plan visits in this way?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware that it is the habit and custom for those on a state visit to

be met at Victoria, or sometimes at Windsor, and for them to proceed through the streets of London. I think that most of the populace of London would wish that to continue.

Q5. **Mr. Robin Squire** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Squire: In the light of my right hon. Friend's interview on Sunday, can she now produce a word that would describe an Opposition party more interested in analysing the reason for past military success than in producing a defence policy designed to avoid future military defeat?

The Prime Minister: I hope that my hon. Friend will think that I showed great restraint in not quoting the remark in full, since it has a great pedigree. In full, it would have been "stark staring bonkers."

Legal Profession Reform

3.30 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make provision for the development of a more unified legal profession by enabling solicitors, as of right to exercise rights of audience in all courts and tribunals, civil and criminal, in England and Wales; to regulate and provide for advertising of pupillages and tenancies in barristers' practices and to enable barristers to establish practices anywhere in England and Wales with direct access to those seeking legal advice and when appropriate, representation, there being no mandatory intervention of any solicitor's or barrister's clerk or any other person whatsoever; to enable barristers and solicitors to practise together in any mutually acceptable form; to enable barristers to litigate for professional fees; to enable barristers to advertise; and to abolish the rank and title of Queen's (or King's) Counsel and the two Counsel rule.

The first thing that we must do is summed up in the words

"let's kill all the lawyers",

as Dick said in Henry VI, part II. Ever moderate, and because some of my best friends are lawyers, I am not proposing to take that extreme course, but I am proposing to save the lawyers from themselves, and to save the consumer from them.

My Bill deals with three problems. The first is the ever-escalating scale of legal costs. In the BBC libel case it is estimated that of £900,000 of legal costs, £650,000 were fees. It worked out at £1,149·42 per day for QCs and £574·71p for their juniors. Secondly, the processes are slow, arcane, cumbersome and inefficient. Thirdly, the system is characterised by monopolies and restrictive practices that are at variance with the competitive ethose of the times. Too much is regulation by barristers for barristers.

Therefore, the first thing that my Bill does is give solicitors rights of audience in every court, thus ending the barristers' monopoly of the higher courts, which will be welcomed by most customers. After all, there is no point in having a Rolls-Royce when a Mini will do equally well. Most people prefer to be represented by someone who knows them, and knows their problems and their case, rather than by a total stranger who is thrust on them at the last minute, all too often on the day of the case itself. The rich can buy the barrister of their choice, but the poor get Murphy's law, and all too often Murphy himself.

The Bill will be welcomed by most solicitors. It allows those who want to specialise in advocacy to do so. Indeed, on 27 March last year, the Law Society launched a campaign to end the Bar's monopoly of advocacy. It said: "citizens should be entitled to retain the advocate of their choice and not to have to employ more lawyers than are necessary for the case."

I say, "Hear, hear," to the Law Society, for once. I am afraid that the Law Society has gone a little quiet about it probably because of the threat by barristers that conveyancing will be handed to banks and building societies unless the Law Society lays off. I have to tell the Law Society that conveyancing will go to banks and building societies anyway, and the principle of equal access to the courts is right.

Secondly, the Bill abolishes the distinction of QC, a title conferred by the Lord Chancellor in his doubtless idiosyncratic and wholly undemocratic way, behind closed doors, with no appeal. It is essentially a mark of status. As one QC wrote to congratulate a newly appointed QC:

"You'll talk the same rubbish—but now they'll listen to you."

If people are going to charge higher fees, as QCs do, it should be for quality as designated by the market place, not for status. They should not be able to charge for a junior on half fees to milch the customer at the same time.

The third and most important part of my Bill will democratise the Bar. How wrong it is that we should have a self-selecting, self-regulating elite of some 4,800 barristers whose training is shorter, more amateurish and less adequate than that for solicitors. The profession is exclusive and amateurish, and there are rich rewards. I am talking of incomes of up to £250,000 a year, and even higher. Such incomes are showered on the top, while at the bottom penury prevails. There is a struggle for survival so intense that one has to have either private means or well-placed connections to get in and survive the starvation years.

The right hon. Lady the Prime Minister has testified to what a struggle that is. I was deeply moved in her biography by Penny Junor to read what a struggle the right hon. Lady had to get into chambers, and how much prejudice there was against a woman, just as there is now prejudice against blacks, and how Sir John Senter promised her a place in his chambers and then threw her out at the end of her pupillage, together with the present Secretary of State for the Environment. It was the right hon. Gentleman's first experience of abolition.

Many are called, but few are chosen, and especially not working-class provincials. Mr. Norman Lloyd, the careers officer at Manchester university, quotes one barrister as saying:

"My advice to working class students would be to avoid the bar at all costs."

Mr. Lloyd says:

"The entry route is an obstacle route so elaborate and so bizarre that it might have been invented by the producer of It's a Knockout."

He is right. That is why my Bill regulates pupillage to ensure that it is a proper training and that it is paid. That is why it regulates tenancies to ensure that they are advertised openly, encourages the co-operative pooling of fees, as in Lord Gifford's chambers, and stops exploitation by the head of chambers.

The Bill allows barristers to set up practices wherever they please even in co-operation with solicitors—as the Royal Commission on legal services recommended—without the intervention of barristers' clerks.

Barristers' clerks have been variously described as an untrained legal mafia or as barristers' pimps. They have been described as a "unique and disturbing breed"—unfortunately I forget where that quotation comes from—who manipulate the monopoly power of barristers, all too often for their own purposes because clerks take between 5 and 10 per cent. of all fees. They can earn from £30,000 to £100,000 a year, much of it from public money. Their power must be restrained, and my Bill proposes to do so.

The Bill allows barristers to set up anywhere without the necessity of having clerks. It allows barristers to take customers without going through the intermediary of a solicitor, as they can already take cases from abroad. It is interesting to note that barristers have girded their loins and revised their practices to deal with Common Market competition, but they will not give customers in this country the same benefit. The Bill allows barristers to advertise—something that solicitors have now begun to do, with great benefit to the profession and to the public.

Most other countries have a unified legal profession, and it works well for them. It would here. I see no reason for our obsession with keeping two or even three legal taximeters ticking over, shuffling papers and people to and fro, aggregating dramatis personae in cases, and with not setting up a common training for barristers and solicitors.

It is important to note that my Bill only opens the way to unification. It allows solicitors and barristers to work together in any way that suits them and their purpose. It does not enforce a unified profession.

The Bill keeps specialisation, but it eliminates its excesses. What is most important is that it opens the gateway to change at the Bar. It ends the rigidities and inflexibilities. It paves the way for a more democratic, open and efficient profession which can adjust to the times, because this Government of barristers have made a gospel of competition.

I am not seeking to inflict the same damage on the legal profession as the Government have on manufacturing, by the misguided application of competition. I am saying that the test of restrictive practices, wherever they are, must be public interest and not the convenience of a dreadfully complacent, conservative profession.

On that test, barristers need to be brought kicking, struggling and, no doubt, pleading into the 20th century if we are to have a healthier and more open profession and a better and cheaper service to the public. We want not a closed, proud, restrictive and exclusive profession, but one which serves people and protects their rights and liberties. That is what my Bill will provide for.

3.39 pm

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): I wish to oppose the Bill, but before doing so I wish to declare an interest. In a strange reversal of roles which may appeal to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), I am able to say for the first time in my life that I am a solicitor briefed to appear on behalf of the Bar. Having said that, I must also say that many members of my branch of the legal profession must be surprised to see that a measure which at first glance may appear to benefit them should come from the hon. Member for Great Grimsby. After all, following his single-handed effort to break the solicitors' monopoly of conveyancing, his achievement may well be popular in certain quarters, but he is hardly the most popular toast at the annual dinner of my local Law Society.

The core and essence of the Bill is in the very first sentence, which says that solicitors should have the same rights of audience as barristers in all the courts. I freely accept that, if the House was minded to accept that part of the Bill, the other parts within it fall naturally into place. It would be quite illogical and unfair to give solicitors an equal footing with barristers in courts while at the same time imposing restrictions on barristers in relation to fee collection, partnership and access to the public.

I shall devote my main attention to that part of the Bill, except to say — en passant, as the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) might also say — that the last sentence in the Bill, which calls for the abolition of the two-counsel rule, is just a tiny bit out of date, as I understand that it was abolished some years back.

There are three principal reasons why I invite the House not to extend the rights of audience which solicitors presently enjoy. First, when the last Labour Government set up a commission to examine the legal profession, they rightly framed its terms of reference to incorporate this very question. When the commission finally concluded its judgment — it had 15 members, of whom only two were barristers — its decision was very clear. Even more important than its clarity was the fact that it was helped in its deliberations by a wide process of consultation, not just with solicitors, barristers and the judiciary but with many organisations and people with connections in litigation. The commission concluded that the restriction of the rights of audience in the legal profession underpinned the profession and was in the public interest. That is why this Conservative Government accepted those recommendations.

I have heard nothing since that commission reported, and certainly nothing in the arguments of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, which leads me to think that Parliament should now take a totally different course.

The second reason is that, paradoxically, I believe that the Bill will be detrimental to those whom it is apparently designed to assist — solicitors and members of the public. You, Mr. Speaker, may be aware of the dramatic changes that have occurred in solicitors' practices in the last few years. Those changes were well set out in a recent article in the *Financial Times*. We have seen the growth of major City of London firms which have concentrated to themselves an expertise almost exclusively in certain types of legal work. At the same time we have seen a tremendous extension of scope in the law and its practice.

All these developments have made it increasingly difficult for the average solicitor in the small and medium-sized firm to perform his vital role in his service to the community. That they are still able to do so is caused by a variety of factors. One of the main ones is that in this country there exists an independent and experienced Bar which is available to all solicitors, and hence to all clients, throughout the length and breadth of England and Wales.

The Bill would destroy that independent Bar and, in the wake of that destruction, would destroy many of the small and medium firms to which I have referred, driving their clients into the arms of the bigger firms. The vital role of the independent smaller solicitors practising in every constituency would become a thing of the past.

Finally, I ask the House to reject the Bill because I believe that it perpetuates a disturbing trend in our society — to attack, disparage and ultimately destroy excellence in our professions. No one in the House, not even the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, would dream of promoting a Bill to abolish the distinction between general medical practitioners and medical consultants. No one would deny that both those professions perform equal but different roles for their patients. The same is true of the legal profession. By and large, it serves the community well, with trust and integrity — something that cannot always be said of legal professions in other parts of the world.

Members of Parliament who are barristers can be expected to oppose the Bill and those who are solicitors are likely to view with suspicion a Bill about their profession which comes from the hon. Member for Great Grimsby. It should also be expected, however, that members of the public, who should be our prime if not our only consideration, will feel on mature reflection that they will be ill served by this measure. It is in their name, in their interests and on their behalf that I invite the House to reject the Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 119, Noes 151.

Division No. 234] **[3.49 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fallon, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rost, Peter
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Thurnham, Peter
Torney, Tom
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael
Wiggin, Jerry
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft and
Mr. Ken Weetch.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Donald
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Hon Adam
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cash, William
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Crouch, David
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Fox, Marcus
Gale, Roger
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David John
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Trippier, David
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Wallace, James
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Ian Percival and
Mr. Nicholas Lyell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Opposition Day

[14TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Developing Countries (Famine and Debt)

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. Before I call upon the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, I have to announce that no fewer than 15 Back Benchers have indicated that they would like to speak in the debate. I hope that will be borne in mind by both the Front and the Back Benches.

3.58 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the Government's continuing and substantial cuts in overseas aid and its failure to provide an effective response to the crisis of drought and debt afflicting Sub-Saharan Africa; and calls on the Government to double the official United Kingdom aid programme, both advancing our assistance to developing countries towards the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product and generating employment opportunities in Britain, to take urgent and new measures to increase food, fuel and aid for agricultural development to famine areas, and to promote joint international action to re-schedule and, where possible, write-off the debts of the poorest countries.

There are three main parts to the motion: first, the aid programme in general; secondly, the call for new measures; and, thirdly, the demand for rescheduling and, where possible, writing off the debts of the least developed countries.

The House is aware that the Minister likes to give the appearance of being a well-meaning wet corralled in a hard Cabinet. However, a recent Foreign Affairs Select Committee report on famine in Africa shows that the Government have made no additional resources available for famine relief. The funds have been taken from other ODA development budgets, and in one case, which we raised earlier on the Floor of the House, food aid, which would now be highly welcomed in Bangladesh, was reallocated to Ethiopia instead of extra aid being provided.

One of the major recommendations of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee was that extra funds should be added to the aid budget to cover Government contributions to major disasters such as we are witnessing today in Africa. It is scandalous that at a time when long-term development needs have never been so clearly urgent, Britain is contributing much less to those needs, because £100 million in the 1984-85 financial year was transferred from the development budget to emergency relief.

The Government argue that the ODA's contingency reserve is adequate. We recommend that from now the Government should calculate average annual contributions to emergencies—for example, over the 1980 to 1983 period—and should add into the aid budget for this year a sum equal to the difference between this figure and the planned emergency contributions to Africa. It is time that the Government started to account for emergencies and mobilised the net resources needed to meet them.

The House has also widely noted that the Conservatives have cut the total overall aid programme since they came to office in 1979. But it is not clear by just how much it has been cut. In practice, the total net aid budget has increased from £1·099 billion in 1984-85 to £1·130 billion in 1985-86, a 2·8 per cent. cash increase, but, taking inflation into account, representing a real decrease of about 3 per cent.

The aid contribution of the United Kingdom is now 0·33 of 1 per cent., which represents nearly a 20 per cent. cut in aid spending by the Conservatives since they came to office. As a proportion of GNP, therefore, the Government have not only allowed the programme to fall to under half of the UN target of 0·7, but Britain's record compares badly, for example, with a Government who are much criticised by Conservative Members, that of the French, with 0·76 per cent. of GNP; Germany, 0·49; Belgium, 0·59; the Netherlands, 0·91; Norway, with over 1 per cent; and with a dramatically rising share in the aid programme of Italy, under a Socialist Prime Minister, especially to Sudan and Ethiopia.

Not only are we behind in the overall aid stakes—not only have there been cuts in the overall aid programme — but it has been authoritatively reported that the British Government have been foremost in the Council of Ministers, in the Budget Council of the EEC, in recommending cuts in food aid spending for 1985-86, cuts from the figure proposed by the Commission, of 65 million ecu to 26 million ecu. That is a difference of over £22 million in what the Commission wanted to spend next year and what the British Government recommended should be spent, even though those sums were scheduled simply to maintain the real value of food aid in the 1985-86 period.

It is double standards, therefore, for the Government to claim that they are seriously concerned to defend, far less to extend, the aid budget. In reality, they have not only been cutting it, but cutting it in the European Community.

The Government also say that they are concerned about the quality of aid. Clearly, aid quality is vital in projects such as in the Indian Orissa family welfare project and the fertiliser education project covering six eastern states. It is clear that good models of official aid can help the poorer 50 per cent. of the population.

However, this type of poverty-focused aid represents a small percentage of ODA funds. In particular, only about one third of United Kingdom bilateral aid to Africa goes directly or indirectly to agriculture and related sectors, and only a small proportion of that goes to peasant agriculture and especially towards helping to improve traditional crops such as sorghum and millet.

Perhaps the Government now share a relative distate for large scale prestige projects. But even, for example, expenditure of perhaps £10 million on an individual dam could provide extensive supplementary irrigation to about 300,000 acres, benefiting up to 100,000 families, without doing damage to the environment in the way in which big projects have done. I shall be interested to hear whether the Minister is prepared to make a statement today about that type of project.

Further, on the double standards of the Government, when in a recent television interview relating to the film "African Calvary" the Prime Minister was asked what the United Kingdom could do to help famine victims, she listed among her three priorities one which was designed to help to develop improved varieties of drought-resistant crops. In reality, the Government have taken steps which have resulted in funds being withdrawn from precisely that kind of project.

For example, Oxfam is now funding the arid land seed research project at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, after

[Mr. Stuart Holland]

the Government discontinued funding for it. Oxfam's field director in Ethiopia has pointed out the sad anomaly that the excellent Addis-based international livestock centre for Africa, which works mostly in connection with the problems of poor farmers, now contributes more to the United Kingdom in the form of goods and services purchased here than it receives in EEC aid.

Then there is the issue of the replenishment of IFAD —the International Fund for Agricultural Development —which is one of the most effective organisations in helping to improve peasant farming and which is funded both by Governments of the Western world and OPEC. The OPEC countries have seen a substantial loss in their real revenues with the weakening of the world price of oil, and it is understandable that OPEC feels that it cannot continue to fund IFAD in the way in which it has in the past. The result of the cuts in IFAD's budget will be terrible. As opposed to an injection of $1 billion to last for three years, the agreed three-year replenishment is likely to be only $600 million.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): If the hon. Gentleman intends simply to read out the Oxfam brief, I can perhaps help him by saying that most hon. Members, at any rate on the Conservative Benches, already have copies of it. We should, however, be interested to know how the Labour party would deal with the crisis of famine and debt if they were in government, rather than have the hon. Gentleman tell us what Oxfam proposes, because we know that.

Mr. Holland: The Labour party is committed on aid to achieving 0·7 of 1 per cent. of GNP within the lifetime of a Government. It is also committed to aiming towards 1 per cent. What we are urging on the Government—it is well publicised by Oxfam; I agree with the hon. Gentleman about that — is that precisely for those reasons the Government have no excuse either for continuing their cuts in the aid programme or for claiming that their hands are tied and that they are doing the best that they can.

The Minister—for example, in the case of food aid distribution in the Horn of Africa—has paid lip service to the difficulties caused by the civil war in Eritrea and Tigre, and he has made minor resources available through some of the agencies which may reach either Eritrea or Tigre from Port Sudan. But these resources are minuscule. Eritrea and Tigre need about 20,000 tonnes of food aid per month, whereas only 2,500 tonnes is reaching them. The Government's claim to recognise the problem is not matched by anything like a sufficient scale of food aid allocation for the voluntary agencies at Port Sudan.

Further, the exodus of refugees from Eritrea and Tigre underlines the current crisis in the Sudan. One of the relief centres, Wad Kowli, is now the third largest city in the Sudan. Senior Sudanese officials made it plain earlier this year that they were disappointed with the Minister's visit in January and with his failure to realise that transport and fuel would be needed by the end of April if there was to be any way effectively of distributing food aid to the areas where it is most needed, especially on the borders with Eritrea and Tigre and in west Sudan. It is clear that the Government have relied almost entirely in west Sudan on American agencies taking responsibility for food aid distribution. But now there is a major tragedy in that area.

On 22 March and 5 June the Minister referred to transportation. On 5 June, he claimed that

"large numbers of trucks are already available in Sudan, which has a strong private enterprise trucking agency." —[*Official Report*, 5 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 306.]

In reality, because of its debt problem of between $8 billion and $9 billion, Sudan has not been able to buy the fuel needed to ensure that the private trucking sector is available for food aid distribution.

In December 1984, the Sudanese Government asked for tenders to renew railway rolling stock and equipment in west Sudan. British firms responded magnificently to that request, and some went out there within three or four days. On their return, they immediately submitted tenders— that was by mid-January—but it was only last week that the Minister was able to tell the House that approval for the £6 million project had finally been given by the EEC.

It is quite wrong for there to be such a delay in ensuring that the railway is in working order. Only one fifth of the food that is needed in west Sudan is getting through via the railway. The rains have come. They may not be sufficient to sustain a future crop, but they certainly will wash roads away. Road transport cannot possibly cover the whole of the Sudan. It can be used only on a limited basis in food distribution — for example, around Darfur. Because of the delay in approving the railway project, 1·5 million people in west Sudan are now at risk.

The Minister has repeatedly said to the House, "What can I do? My hands are tied. It takes time for the multilateral aid agencies to operate. Very difficult decisions must be made." In reality, if the EEC would not approve that project, why did the Minister not do what the Germans did? It appears that the German project for refurbishing the railway was not an integrated part of the EEC programme. There is no reason why the British firms which were ready to meet the orders for repair of the railway should not have been able to do so.

Fuel is a similar issue. On 22 March, I put it to the Minister that there was a desperate shortage of fuel in Sudan. Again, he told us that his hands were tied by the EEC. He said that the EEC was examining the issue and that he was foremost in the EEC in arguing the case. I said to him, "Britain is a shipping and oil-producing nation. Why do you not commission a tanker, fill it with fuel, send it to the Sudan and then send the bill to the EEC Commission?" Had that tanker gone to Sudan and had the fuel arrived in April, the food aid distribution problem would have been very different.

In contrast to what the Minister told the House last week, nearly half a million tonnes of food intended for famine victims is said to have piled up in ports in Ethiopia and Sudan because of the lack of transport. Some of that food has been spoilt. A United States official, Mr. Peter McPherson, who is the administrator for the agency for international development, has blamed Ethiopia and Sudan for the hold-up. He has said that neither of those Governments has given transport the priority that it deserves. In Ethiopia's case, the lamentable tragedy of the civil war and the Ethiopian Government's failure to ensure the safe passage of food aid or to allocate sufficient vehicles for food aid distribution are much to be deplored. I know that hon. Members on both sides of the House deplore this. The Government in Sudan should not, however, be blamed. In January, that Government gave the message clearly to the international community and to the Minister. The Minister failed to react.

The cyclone in Bangladesh has directly affected almost 3 million people—more than 1 million seriously—and caused substantial damage to livestock, homes and crops. The Government of Bangladesh have appealed for $50 million to cover the immediate—not long-term—need for food, medicine, shelter, and so on. So far, the United Kingdom has pledged £750,000 from its aid budget. That is probably less than the VAT that the Government have managed to collect from the £8 million raised by the Band Aid project. It shows the lack of priority that the Government are giving to the problem.

Conditional aid and the political refusal to grant aid are also of concern. It is transparently obvious that the so-called technical reasons which the Minister claimed for not granting aid to Nicaragua through the Inter-American Development Bank or the World Bank are entirely without foundation. The Nicaraguans showed me the projects that they have submitted for aid. It is clear that the proposals have been admirably vetted and are technically excellent. There are no essentially technical reasons for blocking aid to Nicaragua; the reasons are political. They reflect the fact that the British Government are prepared to coat-tail the United States rather than concern themselves with a basic needs programme of the type that Nicaragua has already shown it can pioneer—in health, education and food production—and, with resources, deliver.

Mr. Geoff Dennis, a junior civil servant in the ODA, has been suspended without pay and may face charges following allegations that he was involved in the release to hon. Members of information which showed that the technical reasons for denying aid to Nicaragua were implausible. I am sure that I speak for both sides of the House in saying that few of us believe that civil servants should release material to hon. Members in any circumstances, but this case is directly comparable with the Ponting case, where a Minister misled the House. The jury expressed its views on that matter by dismissing the charges brought against Mr. Ponting by the Government under the Official Secrets Act.

We understand that, while Mr. Dennis has been suspended without pay, he is still technically employed by ODA and therefore cannot sign on for unemployment benefit. The Government have already penalised him by his loss of earnings. We suggest to the Government that no charges should be pressed and that Mr. Dennis's salary should be post-dated and paid from now until he is reinstated, or dismissed, by the ODA. We shall carefully watch the Government to ascertain how they choose to handle the matter.

The third part of the motion concerns debt. The scale of the financial crisis is recognised internationally as overwhelming. Mr. Tom Clausen, the head of the World Bank, warned that the future would bring "more Ethiopias" unless action is taken now. It appears, however, that that view is not shared by the Chancellor, who told an IMF meeting that world economic conditions are the best they have been in six years.

Yet between 1980-82 and 1985-87, annual average national capital flows to sub-Saharan Africa fell from $11 million to $5 million. That represents a drying up of private capital aid flows. Official international development funds from the West and the East are stagnant at $9 billion. Many of those loans will have to be repaid shortly. An extra $2 billion is needed to keep the official aid flows to sub-Saharan Africa at the 1980-82 level. That is why the World Bank, in its project for Africa, recommended a $2 billion target. It appears to be clear, unless the Minister says otherwise, that this target will in no way be met. In fact, it is probable that between only a quarter and a half of that sum will be allocated.

Further, the sub-Saharan countries are suffering from crippling debt servicing. Their debt service bill alone in 1981 was $4·1 billion. That is projected to increase on average from 1985 to 1987 to $11·7 billion. In other words, there has been an almost threefold increase in debt servicing in sub-Saharan Africa.

The interest rates are extremely high. While 4·5 per cent. may well not be considered high for official interest rates, they are 12·5 per cent. for private loans. When the United States Administration are recommending more market forces within the African sub-continent, and when they are recommending that the forces of supply and demand should make a contribution to development, what is the development difference between interest rates of 4·5 per cent. and 12·5 per cent? It is not merely 8 per cent; it is the difference between viability and financial bankruptcy. That is what is now facing the sub-Saharan countries.

In the sub-Saharan countries, overall debt service is now rising to about 27 per cent. of total export earnings. That is twice the ratio of 1977. Therefore, even if there had been no drought, there would be a development crisis in Africa today. The measures that the international community is taking in relation to the crisis vary substantially. There is the obduracy of the United States and the unwillingness of our Government to pioneer and press for increases rather than cuts in EEC programmes, so the position is getting worse.

It is relevant to make a comparison with the cost of intervention storage and export subsidies of the food programme in the CAP. It now amounts to about $10 billion in a total EEC budget of $16 billion. Against that, the Government were pressing that the spending on the food aid programme for next year should be reduced by £22 million.

In reality, who are the real debtors? The biggest debtor in the world at the moment is the United States. The biggest creditor in the world at the moment—although it may shortly be Japan—is the United Kingdom. We are lending all right—the Government do not have a bias against lending—but we are lending to the rich and to the most developed countries. We are not lending on a sufficient scale to the lesser or least developed countries.

There are other issues that the House has addressed on other occasions concerning the deteriorating terms of trade of Third world countries, the practice of IMF conditionality, and other matters, but in reality the three main parts of the motion are crucial.

Have the Government any target whatever for increasing official development assistance over the lifetime of this Parliament? Will they undertake substantial new measures to remedy drought in sub-Saharan Africa, rather than the minuscule measures which are a fraction of the debt needs and development needs of those countries? What action will the Government take internationally either to reschedule or to write off the debts of the poorest countries? I am not talking here about the conversion of loan into grant, because we appreciate that the Overseas Development Administration has a record for doing that with the least developed countries. It is the overall financial debt that is crippling those countries.

[Mr. Holland]

The Government have acted too late. They have failed to respond to warnings. They are, with other EEC Governments, directly culpable for the fact that a railway in the Sudan is not now functioning, and that another 1·5 million people are now suffering in addition to the 10 million migrants and the 100 million other people affected by the drought. The Government must learn the lessons of the famine and act urgently along the lines recommended in the motion. It is for that reason that I commend it to the House.

4.24 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the effectiveness of the Government's action in tackling the famine in Africa; endorses its policies to promote long term development in Africa; supports the present approach of the Government and the international financial institutions to the severe debt problems of the day; and recognises that Britain's aid policy confers real benefits not only on the developing countries but also on British industry and employment.'.

The Opposition motion focuses on a number of topics, but especially on sub-Saharan Africa, and that is as it should be. It is there, after all, that the famine has been so devastating. It is there that the long-term development problems seem most formidable. It is also there that we have special responsibilities.

We cannot do everything across the world; we have to concentrate to some extent. Quite rightly, we do a great deal in the Indian subcontinent. We are active in other areas of Asia, such as Indonesia. We have important programmes in the Caribbean and the south Pacific. We have to sustain and develop our own dependencies. There are other useful things that we do across the world, not least in English language training and technical co-operation in many countries. But Africa presents the greatest challenge to us. We are heavily involved there and we are contributing heavily.

As we all know, the famine has highlighted in the most terrible way a profound and long-term problem. I shall look first at the immediate crisis and then at the long-term crisis.

Many people have said—rather glibly—that nothing was done until the television cameras aimed on Ethiopia and then the Sudan. That, of course, is false. As it happens, Ethiopia was the biggest recipient of aid under the Lomé 2 convention and the biggest African recipient of food aid from Britain over the three years before last autumn.

Sudan has not, in the past, been so big a recipient of food aid. Although we provided 45,000 tonnes of wheat in 1983 and 1984 to help the UN refugee programme there, the Sudanese themselves have not normally needed or asked for food aid. But Sudan has one of the biggest British bilateral development programmes, and we have been involved there for many years. Sudan was also, like Ethiopia, one of the largest recipients of European Community aid under Lomé 2. So it is far from the case that we or other donors have been doing nothing. Nevertheless, the famine has come with a dreadful impact, and no one can possibly be complacent about what happened or say that enough had been done by the world as a whole.

The motion alleges that we have not provided an effective response to the drought crisis.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I should like to put a question to the Minister before he leaves the problems of the Sudan. I am not quarrelling with him, but in the statement last week he was a bit dismissive of my question about trucks. Yesterday, Mr. Prattley and other senior officials of the United Nations said that trucks and fleets of lorries were needed, above all else. The Minister knows my interest in relation to trucks at Bathgate and I do not press that too strongly. It has been widely said in my constituency, "We have all these trucks lying around. Why cannot some of them go to the Sudan?" What is the answer to that question?

Mr. Raison: I have not left the problems of the Sudan, and I am about to say something about trucks. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will stay and listen to what I have to say. I am sure that he will.

I want to tell the House what we have been doing in Ethiopia and the Sudan, two countries to which we have specifically directed our relief efforts. Of course, I recognise that other countries are badly affected, but our help to them is mainly carried out through the European Community and other multilateral organisations.

In Ethiopia, since October 1984 we have provided over £40 million—£28 million bilaterally and more than £12 million through our share of Community actions. We have provided a wide range of assistance, including food aid. As I said yesterday, I am ready to offer more when we are satisfied about proper arrangements for its transport and distribution. We have provided transport itself, including lorries, Land Rovers, semi-trailers and mobile workshops and spare parts. We have provided medical equipment, tents and blankets, seeds and tools.

The RAF and Army detachments have done a marvellous job since last November. They have flown 10 hours a day every day since then, including over 300 airdrop missions. To date, they have successfully delivered over 4,500 tonnes of grain and other supplies. I must also mention that we have provided two men for the world food programme team monitoring the distribution of food supplies. They have been working in Eritrea and Wollo.

The overall position is now broadly as follows. The recent widespread rains have favoured the secondary belg crop to be harvested shortly and land preparation for the main crop, which is scheduled for planting in the next few weeks. However, those rains have also impeded the distribution of supplies in some remote areas. The main rains, which we hope will come during the next three months, will make road transport more difficult.

Of the 1·1 million tonnes of food aid pledged, some 60 per cent., that is 680,000 tonnes, has been shipped. About 185,000 tonnes are now in the three ports and 135,000 tonnes are in store or being distributed. The main problem now in Ethiopia is the shortage of transport, which is seriously hampering distribution. The Ethiopian authorities have recently provided 350 lorries to increase the daily offtake at Port Assab to 3,000 tonnes, but they need to do more. Yesterday I announced the further assistance that we shall be providing—£750,000 for land transport, the extension of the airlift to the end of September, and 10,000 tonnes of grain to be used when it is needed and can be used effectively.

Finally, although the position is desperate in many respects, one redeeming feature has been the effective co-ordination between the donors — typified perhaps by West and East co-operating on the airdrops — and the Ethiopian authorities. Great credit for that goes to Mr. Kurt Jansson, the United Nations' co-ordinator, who is doing an excellent job in difficult circumstances.

Mr. Stuart Holland: The Minister will be as aware as anyone that air transport is expensive. We are not saying that the Hercules aircraft should not be there. Indeed, we would even say that at this stage there should be more of them. Will the right hon. Gentleman address himself to why the railway is not working, and why there was a six-month delay in approving the project, which means that the bulk of the food aid cannot get through?

Mr. Raison: The hon. Gentleman is confusing Ethiopia and the Sudan. I have just been talking about Ethiopia, where the Royal Air Force has been operating. I now come to the Sudan.

Our efforts in the Sudan have also been considerable. We have provided a total of £17 million for famine relief since last October. That is all additional to our normal substantial development aid programme in Sudan. Our contribution includes the cost of 62,000 tonnes of food aid, all of which has now been delivered to Port Sudan. When I was there earlier this year, I formed the strong view that we must get our food aid there before the rainy season. I said that on my return, and we have succeeded in that objective.

We have also provided more than £5 million to the voluntary agencies, including assistance to Save the Children Fund for overland distribution and an airlift to western Sudan. I welcome the appointment of Mr. Winston Prattley as the United Nations' Secretary General's representative to do a similar job in the Sudan to that done by Mr. Jansson in Ethiopia.

Food is now arriving in significant quantities in Port Sudan. More than 700,000 tonnes have been delivered, and pledges now cover the estimated requirement of 1·4 million tonnes to October. Distribution is a critical problem, especially, as the hon. Gentleman fairly said, in Darfur in the west. It is right that attention is focused there at present. The monthly cereal requirement there is more than 30,000 tonnes. The airlifting of medicines and supplementary foods will be invaluable, but airlifts cannot cope with these tonnages of cereals.

Overland trucking is difficult in desert conditions. It has been averaging 100 tonnes a day. Efforts are being made to mobilise more lorries, but the key is the railway. Its performance has been weak, and has averaged 200 to 300 tonnes a day. Our expert advice is that that could be at least doubled through a system of so-called block trains devoted exlusively to transporting food and relief supplies. We have provided technical help for that from British Rail, and I have pressed the Community into funding the emergency rehabilitation of locomotives. It is hoped that the system will begin operation between Kosti on the Nile and Nyala within the next week, although it is primarily in the hands of the Sudanese authorities. However, we shall continue to do everything that we can to support efforts to improve this vital rail link.

The problems will not be over when the grain reaches Nyala. Rains will undoubtedly make distribution even more difficult. However, we have already provided considerable support for the Save the Children Fund logistics effort in Darfur.

Today I can announce further assistance. We are providing a grant of £1·2 million to Save the Children Fund to purchase 60 Leyland trucks and to hire an additional 50 lorries in Sudan. The trucks will be used to move food supplies from Kosti and Omdurman to Nyala in western Sudan. Leyland Trucks has offered to loan Save the Children Fund free of charge an engineer to service the new trucks for a period of 12 months.

I am also providing a grant of £150,000 to the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development to buy 12 four-wheel-drive vehicles and spares, which will be used by the Church organisation, Sudan Aid, to distribute food to more than 100,000 families in western Sudan and the greater Khartoum area.

I have also approved a further grant of £1 million to the 1985 Africa appeal of the International Committee of the Red Cross and a donation of £250,000 to the United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation appeal to enable cereals to be distributed to villages affected by drought in Niger.

We also continue to respond generously to refugee appeals. I have now agreed to provide £3 million in response to three 1985 appeals from the United Nations high commissioner for refugees. We shall contribute £1·5 million to the Africa emergency appeal, £1 million for Sudan and £500,000 for Somalia. Our contributions to the Africa emergency and Sudan appeals will help with UNHCR programmes for the 700,000 refugees in Sudan both for short-term needs and longer-term settlement schemes.

Our £500,000 for the Somalia programme will help with the UNHCR provision of food, medical and water supplies, transport and education. Since 1 April we have committed £5·85 million in response to various refugee appeals for Africa.

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): Was any of that new money?

Mr. Raison: The money comes from our aid budget. I shall come back to that subject in a moment.

Throughout, I have taken the view that it is not merely gestures that are wanted, but effective action specifically targeted at priority needs. That is why so much of our effort has gone on transport and distribution, and why both in Addis Ababa and Khartoum our embassies have worked so actively and effectively to that end. There is absolutely no doubt of the value of our contribution in the countries concerned, and I am proud of what is being done in the name of Britain in these desperate circumstances.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) asked about our attitude to European Community food aid. On 7 May I wrote to him about that and explained that in the April Budget Council we had supported a Presidency which increased by 25 million ecu, or £14·5 million, the level of food aid appropriations over those in previous draft budgets. On 22 May my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury accepted further increases worth a total of £52·8 million above the original figure.

I am sure the hon. Gentleman appreciates that it is wrong to equate the level of EC food and the size of the famine relief effort. The two largest recipients of food aid are India and Egypt, and this year some food aid has gone

[Mr. Raison]

to Malta. Most food aid is sold by recipient Governments, which is perfectly legitimate in terms of their agreement with the Community. Only a comparatively small but growing proportion of the budget is spent on sending food to famine victims.

During the past months my whole object in the EC has been to get the Community to focus its food aid primarily on those areas where the need is greatest. We have had considerable achievements in that respect. The House knows very well that indiscriminate food aid does not do any good, but is a way of using up surpluses. The effect can often be detrimental to the proper indigenous agriculture in the countries concerned.

Mr. Stuart Holland: In relation to the 25 million ecu, will the Minister confirm or deny that the Commission's proposal was for 65 million ecu? The difference in today's prices is £22 million. Did the Commission propose the higher figure or not?

Mr. Raison: There were proposals for higher figures, but I repeat that our objective, which has been successful, is to get food aid in the Community focused much more on areas of actual need. The hon. Member for Vauxhall knows that at the Dublin summit the Prime Minister took the lead in ensuring that the Community would retarget its food aid on areas where famine relief was most desperately needed. We were successful in that and we have been successful in continuing the campaign to get food aid properly targeted. The hon. Gentleman is talking about an indiscriminate increase in food aid, which he knows would not be helpful developmentally in many instances.

The hon. Gentleman referred to fuel supplies in the Sudan. After I went there earlier in the year I, too, was concerned. However, it appears that the situation appears to have eased. The United States and Saudi Arabia have guaranteed the financing of fuel imports for four months from April. The world food programme and the United Nations high commissioner for refugees have set up their own fuel and storage arrangements. Britain contributed $272,000 for the distribution of our most recent consignment of food aid, which arrived at Port Sudan on 17 May. I do not deny that there have been apprehensions about the supply of fuel, especially diesel, but, as I found, the situation has not been as desperate as was feared.

Questions have been raised about the source of the resources that we have put into famine relief. There has been some added money on top of the aid programme. The Ministry of Defence has provided the greater part of the cost of the Hercules operation in Ethiopia. That will amount to an extra £10·5 million by the end of September. As we know, the public have responded with great generosity. If people feel that more should be spent, this is an area where they can do exactly what they feel, through our admirable voluntary agencies. For our part, we have consistently worked closely with the agencies, often placing our aid through them.

What about the Government's own response? I fully accept that we have had to operate within the limits of our overall aid budget. We are committed as a Government to the firm control of public expenditure. Nevertheless, we have provided very substantial resources towards dealing with famine in both short-term relief and long-term development.

In the last financial year, which ran to the end of March 1985, we spent, directly and indirectly, about £95 million on famine-related operations in Africa. To achieve this we drew on the contingency reserve, because that is what the reserve is for. We drew also on our bilateral food aid. We contributed through the European Community and we utilised some funds which became free as a result of slippages elsewhere in our programme. No country or multilateral programme suffered enforced reduction to achieve this. By flexible management we have succeeded in concentrating on the greatest needs. As for this financial year, I have announced that we expect to spend £60 million bilaterally and multilaterally as a minimum planning figure. If we have to find more, we shall.

These are very considerable amounts, but it is not only the quantity of our response that is significant. The quality and effectiveness of the response is similarly significant, as is our lead in stepping up and accelerating the Community's response at Dublin, in the Foreign Affairs and Development Council and in Coreper in Brussels.

Mr. Reg Prentice (Daventry): My intervention is directed to the way in which development aid is funded. The contingency reserve and the other sources to which my right hon. Friend has referred are all very well in most years for short-term emergencies, but the scale of what is happening in Africa and the likelihood that the problems will continue for some years are factors which present a new dimension and require that something should be added to the figures which would otherwise be available in the next few years. Will the Minister ask his colleagues to take that on board in the context of the next public expenditure review?

Mr. Raison: I respect my right hon. Friend's views, and I am aware that he has the courage of his convictions because of his past actions. I hope that what I have said already and what I am about to say about long-term development will show that we are able under our present aid budget to mount an effective programme in the short term and the longer term.

I shall address myself to the longer term. Confronting the short-term disaster must not distract us from tackling the challenge of longer-term development. If we had to cut short our plans for this to provide relief, we should be sacrificing the future to the present. It is important to press on, especially with aid which will help our African friends to put their own house in order, and to reshape their development plans in the light of the lessons learnt during the present crisis. This means searching for ways to make our aid both speedier and more effective.

Within all our memories, the large and poor countries of south Asia faced similar difficulties in feeding their rapidly growing populations. There were terrible famines in India. Pakistan was a major food importer. Malnutrition was widespread in Bangladesh, especially after floods or cyclones. The plight of these countries was widely regarded as desperate and likely to remain so—fragile economies balanced on the knife edge of the Asian climate.

Less than a generation later the picture is transformed. All these countries now have the capacity to feed themselves. Food grain production is at record levels. Even in Bangladesh, and even in a year of floods and cyclones, the grain stored in earlier years is finding its way through the food distribution system to those in need. And

India is emerging as a food aid donor in its own right: it has already given 10 times as much to Ethiopia in the past six months as the Russians have given.

These countries are still dependent on good weather, and they still need development assistance, but they show what can be achieved. They have had Government policies, which have encouraged food production. They have harnessed the technology of the green revolution. They have had support from the donor community in the early years and in the bad years. And they provide an encouragement to all of us who are concerned about today's desperate famine in Africa.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West) *rose*——

Mr. Raison: I must press on.

Mr. Madden: I wish to intervene on the Minister's last point.

Mr. Raison: No. I must press on. Mr. Deputy Speaker has asked us to show restraint.

In 1984 we spent £234 million on direct bilateral development aid to sub-Saharan Africa. We have changed the emphasis of what we do to meet the changing needs. First, importance is given whenever possible to manpower aids of all kinds. All too often, poor management has led to poor maintenance, inefficient operation and the decay of expensive and important investments. In particular, we have to give help not only in the field but to administrations.

Secondly, we have gone over to supplying much more fast-spending programme aid. This is to keep existing assets going and to provide spares and other items which so many countries can no longer afford to buy for themselves. Last year, I agreed major allocations for nearly £39 million of this kind of aid for seven countries, chiefly to back up sectoral or macro-economic reform programmes. The bulk of this aid went directly or indirectly to support agriculture and other natural resources. In the same spirit, we have set aside £75 million over the next five years as untied grants for commitment alongside the World Bank's new African special facility.

The third element in our aid is to look much more closely at what can be done to revitalise peasant agriculture. Together with this, we have to work out ways of more directly reinforcing attempts to reduce population growth and to protect the environment, and especially bush and forest cover. These things cannot really be separated. To the farmer himself, or herself, they are all aspects of the struggle for existence. On the agricultural side, one major task is to rebuild national research systems in a way which actually seeks to answer the farmer's own problems, and to find ways of encouraging agro-forestry and the growth of woodlots which people can see as being of early and immediate advantage to them.

Indeed, the longer-term answer to famine and drought lies not in food aid and emergency relief aid but in lasting answers to the underlying problems. Research and development work, especially in the renewable natural resources sector, will therefore continue to have a high priority within the aid programme. I wish that I had time to describe all the different things that we are supporting in this sector, because the quality of the scientific work that we are backing both here and overseas is recognised as being of outstanding excellence.

These various facets of our aid reflect common perceptions among many donors and, I am glad to say, increasingly among African Governments. They also lead naturally to greater importance for the so-called policy dialogue, which is the fourth strand in our thinking. If we are to provide fast-spending, fast-consumed aid, or manpower aid, it can be most effective only within a policy framework discussed collectively with the donors. This will ensure proper, co-ordinated use. It is particularly encouraging that many African Governments are making real efforts to change their agricultural policies and systems so as to give the enterprise of the farmer room to flourish. The best recent example is the astonishing performance of peasant farmers in Zimbabwe. Thanks to good incentives and good marketing, despite last year's drought, they produced two fifths of the country's marketed grain — and did so from generally less productive land.

All in all, a new strategic approach to development in Africa is emerging. It is an approach which will stress, on the one hand, good research and ecology and effective population policies, and, on the other, not only effective co-ordination and dialogue, but the need for proper incentives to farmers — including adequate food prices, realistic exchange rates, a determined drive to escape from deadening and incompetent parastatals and bureaucracies, effective control of public expenditure, and real scope for the private sector. In the development of this strategy, the World Bank has played a leading part—so, on the more short-term side, has the IMF. It is our general policy to work alongside them towards the same objectives.

Let me move now to the problem of debt. The motion asks us

"to promote joint international action to re-schedule and, where possible, write-off the debts of the poorest countries".

The problems of many countries are severe and long term, and the level of indebtedness and the debt service requirements will remain heavy. Recovery so far has been uneven and the need for further widespread efforts of adjustment remain. None the less, some progress has been made. For instance, the combined current account deficit of the indebted developing countries, excluding middle east oil exporters, in 1984 was only one third of the level in the peak year of 1981. In addition, there has been an overall improvement in growth rates, but this conceals wide discrepancies between countries.

Nevertheless, as the Bonn summit communiqué noted, the problems of indebtedness

"though far from solved, are being flexibly and effectively addressed".

The number of reschedulings has risen rapidly from less than four a year in 1970 to 1980 to some 31 in each of the last two years. Official debts and guaranteed export credits are rescheduled through the Paris club, where a standard approach has evolved. Central to this approach is consideration of the problem of each country case by case, rather than by the blanket method favoured by the Opposition. In this way, a programme of adjustment to tackle the fundamental economic problems, and to secure a return to sustainable long-term growth, can be worked out, supported by co-ordinated financing arrangements. For this reason a conditional IMF programme has been a precondition for Paris club rescheduling.

Terms have become easier, maturities and grace periods are generally longer and re-scheduling fees have declined. In addition, we remain willing to consider multi-year rescheduling arrangements where programmes of adjustment are being implemented successfully — as

[Mr. Raison]

recently in Ecuador. ECGD is now allowed greater flexibility so that cover may be restored where appropriate at an earlier stage after the rescheduling of officially guaranteed debts. Of course, all debt rescheduling involves costs for the creditors. It has to be set against the Government's public expenditure plans or, for aid debts, against competing claims on limited aid resources.

We do not believe that wholesale writing-off of debts is the right answer. However, all the poorest countries are eligible to be considered for retrospective terms adjustment. We have a good record here. We have already cancelled the official aid debts of 12 African countries, amounting to some £211 million, most recently to Mozambique, Ethiopia and Ghana. In total, some £987 million has either been written off, or, in the case of India, local cost aid is provided up to the level of official aid repayments due each year. Largely as a result of this policy, 44 of the 50 poorest countries have no official aid debts to the United Kingdom.

We remain ready to consider applying the same measures to any other eligible countries which so request. Overwhelmingly, our aid to the poorest countries is given, not lent. It does nothing therefore to generate debts—a sharp contrast to Communist bloc practice.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister say more about the Government's attitude to Bangladesh? I am sure he will be aware that there is considerable concern in many parts of the country — not least in Bradford and London, where there are large Bangladeshi communities—about the scale of our response to the disaster. Can the Minister say anything more about what contribution we shall give and what will be the main emphasis of our longer-term aid programme to Bangladesh?

Mr. Raison: That is a vast and important subject, and I understand the hon. Gentleman's interest. We have recently provided an immediate and substantial response, but, more important than that, Bangladesh is one of the two or three biggest aid recipients in the world. We continue to give Bangladesh large resources, and we focus them on dealing with such real problems as those exposed by the recent cyclone. Bangladesh appreciates our aid efforts.

I hope that in what I have said I have shown that Britain is making a very effective contribution to the problem of famine and agriculture, above all in Africa. We are bringing skill, determination and resources to bear, and these problems can be tackled. After all, in Asia we have seen in countries like India — and perhaps even Bangladesh—the threat of famine recede as production and skills develop. Aid plays an important part in this process.

I believe that our approach to debt is sound. We have to work constructively in the world that exists—not in some kind of dreamland El Dorado. At the same time, of course, we are concerned with British interests. We want to develop good relations and see stability increase and potential markets grow. We do not apologise for the fact that a high proportion of our bilateral aid is tied—that 73 per cent. of it returns to Britain in the form of goods and services. The aid trade provision enables us to respond flexibly to commercial opportunities and to counter the mixed credit practices of our competitors. Over the last few years some £350 million of aid trade provision has resulted in British firms winning contracts overseas valued at more than £1,400 million. Those who say that we are idle in this regard should take notice of those facts. We want to help our people too. Nor do I apologise for our stress on effectiveness and policy dialogue. Too much aid has been wasted in the past, and a 10 per cent. increase in effectiveness is as good as a 10 per cent. increase in resources.

Our commitment remains clear. We are not out to promote bad commercial ventures, any more than we are out to prop up bad bureaucracies. We want to see real development—in our own interests, certainly, but above all so that we can see an end to the terrible suffering which, with the aid of television, has so drawn the sympathy of ordinary people.

The motion is sheer Opposition rhetoric. I ask the House to reject it and to support our amendment.

4.58 pm

Dame Judith Hart (Clydesdale): I have one small question for the Minister, on which I should appreciate an answer at the end of the debate. As he will know, yesterday I tabled a question to him about aid for Nicaragua. I tabled a previous question to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary on the same subject. I tabled the questions because I understand that the European Community is requesting that all EEC members double their aid to Nicaragua. What response will the British Government make to that? The issue may not arise until the next Development Council. Has the Commission made its proposals, and, if not, when is it likely to make them? What do we propose to do to respond, and how far does it look as though we shall turn in the direction of the EEC's more generous and more politically realistic policies towards Nicaragua than those of the United States? I should be most grateful for some information on that matter, as I have failed to elicit anything through my parliamentary questions.

I note what the Minister said. Most people, who have been extremely generous, understand well that there has been no extra money from the Government to meet the crisis in Africa. We should be foolish not to welcome what the Government have done. They have done a good deal, but the expenditure which the Minister mentioned came out of the 1984-85 programme and the Minister's contingency reserve. The concept of a contingency reserve is slightly new to me—for at least a couple of years, we did not have an underspend on the aid programme.

Mr. Raison: The contingency reserve is not a description of underspending, but simply a sum which is set aside to deal with emergencies and special needs as they crop up. I should be extremely surprised if the right hon. Lady did not have one when in office.

Dame Judith Hart: I am well aware of that. We somehow found ourselves able to provide whenever we were asked for additional help, without having to set aside money and thus depriving the bilateral aid programme.

Last week, the Minister was good enough to receive a deputation from the social and economic affairs committee of the United Nations Association led by my noble Friend, Lord Ennals, and me. He told us, as I am sure he would be ready to tell the House, that this year, with the crisis in mind, he has increased the contingency reserve from

£45 million to £60 million. In a programme which is not increasing, that represents a cut of £15 million in bilateral or multilateral programmes.

It is scandalous that the aid programme is not increasing to take account of these needs and that money has not been taken from the Government's contingency reserve. When the pop concert with Bob Geldorf, which is hoping to raise £10 million, takes place, I hope that those who attend decide to write to the Prime Minister asking for £10 million to £100 million more on the aid programme to match what those individuals are putting in.

I am glad to hear about the special assistance being given for trucks and other vehicles in Ethiopia and Sudan. I recognise the political problems that are wrapped up in these matters. However, like the Minister, I know that Mali, Niger, Chad and Mozambique, for example, are suffering. The crisis affects a high proportion of Africa.

I should like to consider the inadequacy of the present capacity to respond. The Minister talked about the longer term. The civil servants who provided his brief are knowledgable about the best means of promoting agricultural development. Local peasant farmers need money, but none will be forthcoming from the present aid programme, at least not on the proper scale. Sources of water, roads, fuel costs and the planting of trees require direct development assistance and no amount of getting together with other donor countries and working out what is best is a substitute for them.

The Minister has set his heart on bilateral aid as far as possible. He does not want to join the World Bank multilateral programme, but would far rather provide British help which links in with it. Programmes are being worked out by the World Food Council and we have the United Nations development programme. There must be more development aid expenditure if we are to achieve anything for sub-Saharan Africa in the longer term.

Spending on up-country roads, tree planting and water points, whether for hydro-electricity or tube wells, does not fit the Government's criteria for commercial and political spin-offs. I doubt whether there will be much political spin-off from assisting in the longer-term development of sub-Saharan Africa. Those countries do not carry a tremendous amount of weight in the world arena. I doubt whether there will be more than a fractional commercial spin-off because such spending does not yield large orders for British firms. It involves a high element of local cost and does not involve enormous inputs of machinery.

Long-term development aid to avoid crisis is not compatible with the philosophy of the Government's aid programme. The Minister will have to face that and tell us where he stands. Which will win—the philosophy of the Cabinet Office or the philosophy of development assistance necessary to help the poor in sub-Saharan Africa? He cannot have it both ways. He will have to tell us, because we shall continue to probe him about which way he is going.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation warned the world for about four years about the crisis which was made apparent in the autumn, but nobody listened. The Government, the EEC and the donors of food aid did not listen, but those who knew had given a warning. They continue to give warnings and they are now telling us that matters are likely to get a good deal worse in the next few years. This is not a sporadic 1984-85 crisis which can soon be forgotten. It will go on because of what has happened to the ecology of sub-Saharan Africa.

There is no easy solution. I agree that the green revolution has resulted in massively increased food production in India and Bangladesh, but it can occur only when the new technologies in food production are applied to the right climatic conditions. The right climatic conditions do not exist in sub-Saharan Africa. There might be a considerable population movement from areas incapable of supporting people. Some communities might be saved by the right injection of assistance, but the prospects are not good.

Year by year, for the next five, six or 10 years, will we have the saga of money and food being found a little too late, taking a long time to get there, and incapable of being delivered because of the shortage of transport, trucks and so on? Are we not capable of devising a better approach to meeting what clearly will be a deep need in sub-Saharan Africa for some little time to come? That period will stretch over the next couple of years.

We have available to us the following. There are forecasts and intelligence reports, not just the global or African predictions of FAO, but a highly sophisticated method by which it is possible to forecast a few months ahead when a food crisis will hit a particular area because of what happens on the market, what people are selling and what they are doing with the food that they take to the market. All that is well known. Forecasting is possible. We can know three to six months in advance exactly in which area a food crisis will arise. Therefore, we have the intelligence.

We have the organisations. There is the office of the United Nations disaster relief co-ordinator. There is our own disaster unit here in Britain. I do not have such a terribly high regard for the EEC's capacity to integrate its various departments, so I do not know whether the European Commission has devised a similar disaster unit that brings together transport, money and food. I very much doubt it. If not, it could have such a unit.

I do not know how far it is possible to link forecasting and planning with the effective provision of what will be needed, near the points where it will be needed. I suppose that we all read the leader in *The Times* yesterday. It is not often these days that I am able to quote with any approval a leader from *The Times* on anything to do with the Third world, but this leader was probably an agricultural correspondent leader rather than a Bauer-dominated aid leader. The Minister quoted some of the things that it said about the increase in world food production. It also stated:

"the debate nevertheless will take place in a world which is awash with food surpluses. Since 1964 world-wide production of wheat and food grains has doubled and kept ahead of population growth . . . While the Commons debates these matters . . . EEC agriculture ministers are also meeting."

So is the world food conference.

"If the world is awash with grain, it is also awash with words about grain."

Again in *The Times* there is a report about the world food conference that is taking place now. It states:

"Algeria, now to be 'bombed' with a million tonnes of very cut price American surplus wheat, is only the first target of the US Department of Agriculture in its new $2 billion offensives against what it says are 'unfair trade practices',—notably the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy."

The EEC agriculture commissioner

"made it clear the EEC meant to defend itself."

[Dame Judith Hart]

In my view, there is something totally obscene about a world that has more than enough food supplies to feed everybody, in which such a dialogue is going on between two of the surplus producers, and in which there is no concrete co-ordinated effort to plan for the future.

I do not mind under which auspices it is, but a strengthened UNDRO linked up with FAO and the EEC might be the right thing—it does not really matter who. Why can there not be a massively strengthened international disaster organisation which not only has the capacity to co-ordinate, which is all that UNDRO does at the moment — it initiates and co-ordinates national responses—but has the money to organise and pay in advance for the surpluses that are likely to be needed, and has the storage and depots, which are not hundreds of miles away, so that months go by while things are being shipped to the countries that need them? The depots, storage and staff should be near the places that are likely to experience crisis.

I do not want to suggest the detail of the countries with which one negotiates a United Nations building for storage, staff, transport—trucks and vehicles of all sorts —medical supplies, tents and all the things which, at the moment, are being shipped or transported. The Minister is spending £10 million on flying such things over by Hercules. How much more sensible it would be if those things were near at hand to the Sudan, Ethiopia, Mali, Chad and Niger. That is more likely to be saving money than spending money.

I see no reason why that could not be done. It will need an initiative. It can be an initiative that links up with the voluntary agencies. They too can use the storage facilities and organise their vehicles and staff from such centres. However, an initiative will be needed, and I am very much afraid that it is the sort of initiative that can come only from the Minister. I am also very much afraid that the Minister's attitude is just a little too complacent to permit him to take such an initiative.

5.17 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I think that we would all agree with the right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) about the obscenity of the glut of food in some parts of the world and the famine that is prevailing in large parts of Africa. However, I think that we can all recognise, although we often criticise the European common agricultural policy, that it is thanks to that policy that we have an abundant surplus and can make a great deal of grain available at present. Before that policy was introduced, we might have been hard put to do so.

The right hon. Lady recognised—I think that we all do—that Africa is dying—not just the people, but the land. The crisis ahead is serious. Some of the causes can be attributed to what, without blasphemy, one could call an act of God—the drought. However, there is another aspect, which is man-made, and I should like to concentrate on it.

The drought is a major cause, but it is not the only one. War is almost as important. Two horsemen of the Apocalypse are famine and war, followed closely by pestilence. When people are weakened by famine and the consequences of war, they can no longer fight back against the natural disasters that confront them. Therefore, the four horsemen are having it pretty good in the sub-Sahara.

We need to focus on the man-made aspects, because we can make a greater contribution there than we can make to solving the problem of drought. Perhaps we could do more. Let us take Ethiopia for a start. A civil war is being waged by the central Government against Eritrea and Tigre. When I was in the Sudan some months ago, I went to some of the refugee camps in the east, near Kassala. Part of the refugee population was escaping from the famine but an even larger part was escaping from the bombing and the excursions of the Ethiopian army. The people came bringing such wealth as they had—their livestock—half of which had perished on the way. Even if the weather had been better in Ethiopia, there could be no agricultural reconstruction in Eritrea and Tigre while the civil war went on.

There is not the same degree of famine in the Ogaden, but about 1 million Somalis have left that region to pour into Somalia because of the incursions of the Ethiopian Government. The southern Sudan is in insurrection against Khartoum. I shall not go into the rights or wrongs of that, but the dissident action is actively supported by the Ethiopian Government. According to the latest report that I have, famine is now occurring in what should be a naturally rich region of Sudan.

There is a problem there upon which we should focus a little. The chances of lifting Sudan out of its historical poverty were the discoveries of oil in the south and the development of the Jonglei canal. All that has been stopped by the civil war in the south. Until that civil war is ended, in whichever way, it seems that famine will continue there, and the chances of Sudan recovering and establishing itself and developing its economy will be greatly retarded.

In the Darfur region of the Sudan, which has been mentioned, there is a growing element of local famine. It is nourished additionally by the influx of refugees from Chad. I am no expert on the position in Chad, but I cannot believe that those refugees are migrating to the Sudan exclusively because of the drought. I cannot help thinking that the war in Chad is a major element in pushing them out.

There is the political factor of civil war or war encouraged in southern Sudan by Ethiopia or in Chad by Libya. The effects of war are plain enough. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development told us yesterday that shortage of transport is the main problem in Darfur. I believe that he said that the Ethiopians have 4,000 trucks and had made about 1,500 available so far. Of course the Ethiopians cannot make more available when they are fighting a war. Those of us who have been involved in military operations know how much transport that requires.

We are reaching a point where, given the extent of the aid that we provide, we should be insisting on a ceasefire in all those wars. It is not fair that our people, through taxation or voluntary donations, should be contributing to the relief of the famine which the Ethiopian Government — it may be other Governments as well — are exacerbating, not by neglect or inefficiency—we could accept that in an African country — but by their deliberate prosecution of military measures.

I shall be asked what leverage we have and what we can do about that. We plainly cannot cut off aid from people who are dying or from the starving, even for political reasons; but long-term aid is another matter. If I am right —my right hon. Friend will correct me if I am wrong—

we do not have any bilateral long-term aid arrangements with Ethiopia, but we contribute substantially to European aid to Ethiopia through the Lomé convention. I believe that that is the biggest aid package that Ethiopia receives.

I understand that it is a principle of the European Community that political strings are not attached to the aid that we provide as a Community. It is time that we reconsidered that. This country is a major donor through the European Community and we have a strong voice within the European Community. It is high time that we insisted that there should be a change in the political attitude of Ethiopia to its regions and towards southern Sudan if further long-term aid is to be given. I am not talking about short-term aid to save the dying.

Normally, one does not want to interfere with the internal affairs of a sovereign state, but this is not a normal situation. As it seems to depend upon Europe and the United States for the aid that it receives, we are in a strong position to talk to Ethiopia about future long-term aid.

If that approach does not succeed, we should seriously consider whether we should concentrate our aid in the future on those countries whose Governments are more or less co-operative, such as Sudan and Somalia.

I should like to say a word before concluding on the subject of foreign debt. It is a different subject and one which is much less emotive. It is dry as dust. We have learned to live with the problem, but it will not go away. It is a time bomb under the international financial system. The heavy debts incurred by Third world countries are dangerous for them. So long as they are in debt and cannot meet their obligations, they will find it difficult to obtain new loans on any investment from the industrialised West. Their development will therefore be hampered. The debts are also dangerous for the creditors.

The American banks have a curious regulation which I shall not seek to justify. They show their loans as an asset in their balance sheets. Everyone is aware that many of the Latin American debts are non-performing, but they are still shown as assets in the balance sheets of American banks. If there were a major default or a cartel of defaulting debtors, many of the banks might have to close their doors. I am not worried about the banks, but I am worried about the international repercussions.

In 1929, at the time of the Wall street crash, the dollar retained its value because it was tied to gold. The dollar is now tied to nothing. It has become the only source of wealth which is recognised by all the central banks. What is the answer to the problem? The International Monetary Fund, of course, has come up with the correct and logical answer — debtor countries must pursue policies of deflation, tighten their belts and so on. That is all right up to a point, but if they do that too far there could be dangerous political repercussions. Is there any other way? I shall take an analogy from Marshall aid. When Marshall aid was given, most of the recipient countries realised that they could never repay their obligations to the United States. They therefore set aside what were called counterpart funds. It was their local currency guarantee against inflation. The money was available for investment or for the purchase of local assets by western countries on terms to be agreed by the Government of the country involved. Could we do something of the kind again?

Could the debtor countries make available in their own currency — guaranteed, as I say, against inflation — a proportion of their debt which could be taken up by the United States, Great Britain, Japan or other interests to open banks or insurance agencies or to buy a stake in the country involved? If that is put, as I have put it, to Latin American debtor countries, they say that they cannot part with the national patrimony. They talk about "patrimonia nacional" with great emotion. They see a colonialist threat in parting with their assets. Yet the Chinese People's Republic — Communist China — seems prepared to do just that, despite its experience of foreign investment under imperial China. I would have thought that that was a less painful operation than the one which the IMF is otherwise bound to recommend. If it were carried out, it would give confidence to western investors generally to invest in those countries, and it would also give confidence to the banks to lend again.

I am glad to say that we are not as much involved as the United States, but we are sufficiently involved to make it worthwhile for our Government, in their discussions with the Americans, the IMF and the World Bank, to raise this question more seriously than it has been raised so far.

5.30 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): As this is an extremely short debate, I shall be brief. However, it gives us an important opportunity to look at the Government's response to the present famine crisis. Although the Minister diagnosed the problems which the suffering parts of Africa are now facing and spoke of the long-term need for a new strategy, he gave very little evidence of how he saw the present British Government contributing to the solution of those problems.

The right hon. Gentleman was right to speak of the need to bring about the effective rescheduling of debt, but there was no recognition in what he said of the considerable difficulties that face us in bringing about that effective rescheduling. In particular, there was no recognition of the probability that the position will get worse rather than better if the United States, as seems likely, goes into recession over the next two years.

In fact, the Minister's attitude was somewhat complacent. It was defensive, and intellectually honest enough to diagnose the problem, but it was cribbed and confined by the Government's mistaken policy — for which the right hon. Gentleman has only a limited responsibility—for curbing public expenditure.

If the British Government, as part of the European Community, encourage their European partners to continue to proceed with this restrictive policy, we shall fail to tackle the problems of the less-developed world. Indeed, we can only expect that those problems will get worse, and it is not just a question of the level of overseas aid, even though that is important.

I wish to consider not merely the effectiveness of what the Government have done in the short term to come to the relief of those countries whose plight has so forcefully been brought to the attention of our citizens, whose generous private response has enabled the voluntary aid agencies to make a quite unusual contribution aimed at stemming the worst consequences of this immediate disaster.

It is important to emphasise that the crisis in Africa is not a short-term weather failure. The Minister spoke of a problem that had got worse, and the right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) said that the problem had been recognised for four years by the Food and Agriculture Organisation. In reality, food production in Africa has

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

been declining for at least 10 years, and there has been a process of desertification and deforestation which has progressively undercut Africa's agricultural base.

It is to that question that the British public are increasingly directing their attention. They recognise that although the short-term assistance that we are able to give to improve the distribution of food that we ship in is necessary, it is not enough, and that we should address ourselves to the transformation of Africa's rural economy.

What has gone wrong in this great continent? First, we must recognise that farming methods have contributed to the problem, and in particular have undermined prospects for the small farmer. The Governments of many of the African countries affected have foolishly but understandably invested less in agricultural development than in urban development. Indeed, that urban development has all too often taken place on the back of the small peasant, who is responsible for the greater part of Africa's potential wealth.

A part of the blame must also be shared by external countries, in that our international aid programmes have not ensured that our long-term aid has gone to those who need it most — the rural poor. That is why I wish to stress the importance of a proposal that has been made by the independent commission on international humanitarian issues — that we should focus more directly on the provision of assistance to the rural poor through the provision of credit in amounts that will assist those who are unaffected by the larger programmes.

This has already been done with striking success in some countries on the initiative of some of their banking institutions. I particularly cite the example of the Grameen bank—the rural bank—in Bangladesh. Since 1976 that bank has provided a substantial amount of money—$6·2 million — to 58,300 people, almost half of whom are women. That is important in an African context, where the bulk of agricultural activity has traditionally been carried on by women.

Under the Grameen scheme the beneficiaries are the poorest of the poor. There is a cut-off point, so that a person who possesses more than 0·2 hectares is not eligible for assistance. Similar schemes exist in Nepal and Pakistan. The most striking feature of these schemes which should commend them to the Government is the repayment rates, which have been as high as 98 per cent. Only the building societies in this country can boast of such a level of success.

The scheme depends on the provision of credit to a small group of individuals, not members of the same family, who are seeking help in the form of sums from as little as £20 to £200. Collateral is not provided, but each member of the group undertakes to bring pressure to bear on the others to repay. The remarkable success of such schemes has led the independent commission to recommend that financial institutions should examine this example and the lessons which it may have, particularly for the continent of Africa.

Africa has a growing population and the problem of feeding that population with a declining productive capacity is stark and cannot be tackled with present forms of relief. Mr. Edgard Pisani has said that the help that we need to provide for Africa is not to build cathedrals in the desert, but to help with low-cost credit, and I urge the Government to take that course. That is a specific and important contribution which could be made by this country, with its financial expertise and its partnership with other European countries. Such action could bring about a remarkable change in agricultural practices, building up the capacity of the poorest of the poor to adapt to the needs of the situation. The Government should do this in conjunction with, rather than in substitution for, the present aid programme, the restrictions of which have understandably been the main focus of today's debate.

I condemn the Government's action on the level of overseas aid. The Government have simply recycled an amount which is limited by their budgetary policy. It is unacceptable that we should rob some of the world's least well-off countries whose predicament has been less highlighted but is no less real. The Minister claims that his hands are tied, but he must recognise that the specific proposals that I have described for credit aid to small agricultural developments are consistent with the kind of policy which the Government ought to be able to espouse.

5.42 pm

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred to the enormous public interest in this vital issue, and the House owes the Opposition a debt of gratitude for enabling us to discuss it today. I am especially grateful in view of my interest, which I should declare at this point, as chairman of an organisation which, among other things, endeavours to provide food aid for the victims of Soviet policy in Afghanistan; a policy which is purely directed at trying to subjugate that unhappy country by starving its population and destroying its crops and cattle. I therefore have almost daily contact at long distance, and sometimes at closer quarters, with those tragic events.

I am perhaps a little less grateful for the terms of the Opposition motion. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) has been notorious in the past for his somewhat dismissive attitude to the United States Government and to Americans in general, and some may feel that he almost delights in scoring easy runs off them, so I hope that he will not be insulted when I say that in some of his comments today he reminded me of the type of American who believes that difficulties can be solved merely by throwing megabucks at them.

Mr. Stuart Holland: It often helps.

Viscount Cranborne: Despite a few nods in the other direction, that seemed to be the approach of the hon. Gentleman and other Opposition Members today. I am the last to decry the importance of resources, but in the sphere in which I have experience I would rather see £50,000 well spent than £500,000 ill spent, however much the provision of a greater sum might increase the outrage and rhetoric in which the Opposition take such delight.

As those of us who have had the misfortune of seeing it know, famine can strike with enormous speed. Very often, those who study these matters can predict the threat of famine, but once it has occurred it is extremely difficult to put it right. The help that we provide, however great, very often proves inadequate, because of the nature of the beast, and it also tends to be extraordinarily expensive. How much better it would be—I am delighted to have heard this several times from both sides of the House today —if we could concentrate on the long term, on trying to prevent famine; an approach which is not only cheaper but more effective.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) observed with some justice that we cannot do anything about the weather. As a rather better historian than I am, he may care to reflect that the granary of the Roman empire was destroyed largely by the irruption of Semitic peoples bringing huge flocks of sheep and goats in their wake, thus destroying the vegetation which once enabled what is now a desert to feed the greatest empire of the ancient world. So perhaps the weather is not entirely an act of God, but has been brought about by mankind over the course of many centuries.

I am delighted that there seems to be a consensus in the House about the need to consider the long term, but if we are to do that we must pay particular attention to the quality of our aid and the influence that we can bring to bear on that quality by eliminating the human causes of some of the disasters that we see with such horror on television and which some of us have been unfortunate enough to see on the ground with even more effect, dare I say it, than on the little screens in our living rooms.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Pavilion said, the human factor is all too often very largely to blame. I have already referred to the extraordinary events of the past five years in Afghanistan. I do not know whether any Opposition Members have seen a Russian MI24 helicopter gunship. It is an enormous and frightening machine and it can be seen any day of the week in the valleys of Afghanistan. Let us imagine one of those machines wheeling over a valley in which large herds of cattle, sheep and goats are guarded by a young boy. Near the flocks are fields of corn. The gunship comes down over the valley, which is undefended by anti-aircraft weapons. Its first act is to shoot the boy. Its subsequent act is to shoot the sheep, the goats and the cattle. It goes round to make sure that none of them is moving. After that fairly long process, it devotes attention to setting fire to the crops.

It is hardly surprising that there were indicators of famine in Afghanistan. To a lesser degree, the same has occurred in parts of Africa. The nations of the West and public opinion in the Western world can expose what is happening and shame the perpetrators of those ghastly acts into desisting.

Many hon. Members could itemise other factors that are part of the human cause of famine. The list is long, but three items are especially worthy of consideration. During the past few weeks, *The Economist* has addressed itself, with admirable pithiness and understanding, to the way in which so many developing countries produce policies which encourage a drift to the towns. Many inhabitants of those countries already feel that they would like to follow that drift. Will my right hon. Friend the Minister consider the possibility of trying to encourage the recipients of British aid to reverse those policies so that we can encourage the growth of a rural rather than an urban economy?

The Minister knows that that is not always an easy task. Many dictators find it attractive to encourage an urban population rather than a rural one because it tends to be easier to control and easier to bribe. My right hon. Friend is already well seized of the problems in making sure that financial aid is directed where it can be of most use. In the past, far too much money has found its way into the Swiss, and perhaps even the British, bank accounts of Government officials who had no right to it in the first place.

I wonder whether the right hon. and hon. Members who have referred to the human factor this afternoon have got their priorities right. Above all, we should consider the small farmer as an individual, not as part of a collective or a traditional tribal society. Those of us who have seen the dust bowls of Africa, as I have done during the past 20 years, know that a tribal society can lead to too many crops and cattle, the destruction of the soil and the appalling erosion that follows. Equally, we know of the dangers of collective farming and the adhesion to ideologies which may be attractive in theory but which lead to under-production in practice.

I am delighted to have had the opportunity and privilege of taking part in the debate. I congratulate the Minister on what he said this afternoon, and I hope that he will ensure that the human factor, over which we have some control, is not far from his mind when he formulates the important policies to which he referred, and that he will not be swayed by fear or fashion from considering the realities of life.

5.54 pm

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): The hon. Member for Dorset, South (Viscount Cranborne) mentioned Afghanistan twice in his speech. He may be interested to know that, before the Russian involvement in Afghanistan, that country was about the lowest recipient of aid in the Third world. We may learn some interesting lessons from that.

The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), who has left the Chamber, mentioned the effect of war in Ethiopia, and I can only agree with him about the damaging effect of war and civil war in the Third world. I believe it is correct to say that more than 140 wars have taken place there since 1945. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman agrees with me about the need for peace and development programmes under the authority of the United Nations as a solution, on a regional basis, to some of the problems that he raised.

I shall confine my remarks to a few general observations, having considered with great interest the recent Select Committee report on famine in Africa. I am sorry that it has not yet been mentioned in the debate. I begin by committing myself to the statement that the tragedy of human suffering and death which occurred in Africa should never have happened. It is a bitter reflection on the world community that it did happen. No one, least of all no one who followed the growing crisis in Africa during preceding years, should have been in any doubt that we were heading for a major disaster, and this Government, with others, must accept their share of responsibility for that. It is not as though we were not warned.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) said, the FAO-OAU publication in 1982 went by almost unnoticed. In April 1983, just before the general election, we debated famine, and again in the autumn of the same year. The matter received attention in countless conferences. I recall taking part in a very valuable conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Nairobi in October 1983. People were concerned then with malnutrition—the sapping of the will to live effects of malnutrition which have inhabited the Third world for so long. I said at that conference that the trouble was that starvation is news while malnutrition is not.

[Mr. Guy Barnett]

We must use this debate and the evidence that has been gleaned in the Select Committee's report to learn lessons. The Select Committee rightly pointed out that the cause of the famine was not just the drought. There were short-term causes, but I believe that there were deep-seated and long-term causes for what has occurred.

The fact is that the rains failed in Africa. They have done so since time immemorial. Pre-colonial societies knew that, and many of them knew the necessity of maintaining buffer stocks against the possibility of drought in the next season. The hon. Member for Dorset, South played down the importance of the wisdom of tribal societies, but I hope that he will take the fact into account. I hope that he will also realise that those tribal societies, because they had to do it for their very survival, recognised the prime importance of growing enough food to meet the needs of their people.

We are inclined to underestimate the explosive revolutionary impact of the European incursion into Africa which came with colonialism. African people, many of whom did not even have the use of the wheel a century or more ago, were understandably overwhelmed by the technology of the West. The people of the West have encouraged Africans to believe that they knew better and that the West possesed a technological solution to every social, environmental and political problem. The expert has often been treated, therefore, as though he were infallible. He feels, perhaps too easily, that he has nothing to learn and that therefore he has no need to listen, even if he understands the language of his potential informant in Africa. When his chosen project fails, he holds up his hands and exclaims, "Africa wins again."

In fact, Africa has lost heavily because our all too frequent failure to take into account the experience and wisdom of centuries has had the effect of devaluing it. If one wants to know why agriculture and husbandry are held in low regard in Africa—thought of as primitive, almost as degrading for the person who engages in it — I suggest that one should examine the impact of white people during the past 100 years as well as the industrial-based technology that they brought with them.

I said at the outset that the African tragedy ought never to have happened. The pain, misery and deaths which have afflicted hundreds of thousands of people and which will continue to do so were preventable if action had been taken in time. The cost has been colossal, not just in terms of loss of human life and suffering. Famines are disruptive. The resultant distress migrations mean the uprooting of families and whole communities who often travel miles on foot in search of distribution centres. The question arises: how will the people who survive be successfully resettled and enabled to become productive again?

As we have been reminded this afternoon, famine relief is hugely expensive. Famine almost invariably occurs in remote areas where there is an appalling lack of infrastructure development, so the cost of getting food into the mouths of those who need it and medical and other supplies to where they are required is prohibitive.

It is extraordinary that the cost of all this effort should be set against the aid budget. Millions of ordinary folk, both in this country and elsewhere, have dug deep in their pockets and are still doing so, many of them making enormous sacrifices. But not so, apparently, the taxpayer. For one thing, as Oxfam points out in its brief, the proportion of total Government expenditure going to aid has fallen from 1·01 per cent. in 1979-80 to 0·87 per cent, which is the estimate for the current year. Even so, the taxpayer's contribution is unchanged by this massive human disaster.

Can the Minister say that, as a consequence, people who might have received technical assistance will not now be denied it, or that countries which might have received project or sectoral aid will not now get as much as they might otherwise have received? The fact is that under this Government so far the taxpayer has not been required to make any sacrifice. Our aid programme in percentage terms compares poorly with that of most other Western countries. If we cannot persuade the Government to raise the figure, the House must persuade them to restore the principle of aid to the poorest.

The majority of people expect our aid programme to concentrate upon that, not upon the matters which the Minister for Overseas Development mentioned at the end of his speech — commmercial self-interest and other similar objectives. That means a larger and more relevant contribution to the needs of the peasant farmer and the rural community, restoring the funding that has been taken away from the scientific units, which can make an enormous contribution, and making a larger contribution to the International Fund for Agricultural Development. These, and other changes of direction, are urgent. I hope that the Government will at last recognise the need for change.

The subject of this motion should be debated more frequently. It is a matter of great concern to every section of our community. I do not believe that the Government have reflected that concern in the resources that they devote to the aid programme.

6.5 pm

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): Recently I had the privilege of visiting the Sudan and Ethiopia with the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), whose contribution, insight and participation were greatly appreciated by me and the all-party parliamentary group on overseas development under whose auspices we went to those countries.

I was glad to hear the comments of the right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) on the report which appeared yesterday in *The Times*, upon which I, too, have reflected. I hope that she will agree with one or two of my reflections.

Britain stopped guaranteeing its farmers the highest possible prices about 30 years after the Napoleonic wars. At that time, everybody forecast gloom and doom. In practice, Victorian prosperity took over. Britain was not ruined. A similar challenge now faces the Western world. By fixing food prices artificially high in developed countries and artificially low in poor countries, food output swamps Japan's paddy fields, Europe's grain mountains and North America's rich prairies, at the expense of poorer countries, where babies grow faster than crops. These prophetic words of *The Economist* are no less true today than when they were written over a year ago.

The result is that 2 per cent. of the world's farmers —the 24 million in the rich countries, where fewer than one tenth of the people work on farms—are providing nearly a quarter of all the world's food and nearly three quarters of its food exports. The other 98 per cent. of farmers—the 1·2 billion in the poor countries, where up

to two thirds of the people work on the land—grow three quarters of the world's food but still do not have enough to eat.

The average farmer in rich countries, including hobby farmers, produces $8,000 worth of food a year. The average full-time farmer in poor countries produces $650 worth of food a year. The rich land farmer is paid far more than the $8,000 worth that he produces, while the poor land farmer is often paid far less than the $650 worth that he digs out.

If politicians want to help, if politicians can help, there is not one hon. Member whose time could be better spent than in protracted argument for a comprehensive reform of the common agricultural policy, for a comprehensive reform of farm policies worldwide and for a move away from the policies which have been pushing up farm output in countries where obesity is the main medical problem, and pushing it down in countries where malnutrition is the main problem.

The story of World Bank lending to Ethiopia is interesting for many reasons. The bank's lending programme to Ethiopia was doubled after the 1974 revaluation, despite the political concerns of the United States and European Governments. This doubling was justified by the Government's programme of land reform, which had always been considered by the bank as essential both to growth and equity objectives in Ethiopia. Attempts at land reform before 1974 had failed. Post-revolutionary Ethiopia has managed what Stanley Please recognised as "a fairly sound record of macro—and development—oriented economic management, particularly by sub-Saharan African standards."
But the domestic economy continues to weaken in Ethiopia.

Compensation arrangements for nationalised foreign investors were not adequately forthcoming. Foreign investors have become objects of suspicion by the radical Government in Addis Ababa, exemplified by scepticism towards the international values of financial and Western democratic behaviour, which now dents the confidence of Western donors. Meanwhile, calls for a policy dialogue are snubbed by new joint venture codes without guarantees for withdrawal or guarantees to repatriate profits.

The horrible inevitability of disaster, the hallmark of so much of Ethiopia's history, unleashed itself in the famine. Western donors now tread precariously in Addis Ababa, but once again food production must take the pole position. Peasant farmers produce 94 per cent. of the food. The state farms and co-operatives produce 6 per cent. of the food, yet 80 per cent. of the output comes from state farms, 12 per cent. from the producer co-operatives and 8 per cent. from the peasant sector.

With millions of peasant farmers malnourished and starving, the cry from Western donors has been that it is wrong to go for big agricultural schemes, that Lomé 3 should concentrate on the peasant sector, that there should be a policy dialogue, that the agricultural marketing organisations should be reformed and that there should be collective conditionality of the donors, land tenure and a free market. But in reality the enthusiasm dies and can often be insensitively handled. Even the peasant agricultural development programme of the IDA is withdrawn. The Ethiopian Government refuse to accept a World Bank adviser to examine pricing policy.

Not surprisingly, and regrettably, Marxism has no love for policy dialogue, which even now evaporates and is transformed into policy monologue. It is an ideology where people serve policies, instead of the policies serving the people, where the starving villagers come to the refugee workers over the Sudanese border, not the refugee workers to the villagers; where Soviet planes decant thousands of Eritrean and Tigre refugees on to the tarmac of Addis Ababa airport, to be bussed on to resettlement camps in the south-west; where Ethiopian officials take off the dying and dead from the overcrowded, unpressurised holds; where the fire engines wash out the contaminated remains which trickle down the camber of the airfield towards the RAF Lyneham teams, glancing nervously as the water approaches their supplies, hopefully, this time, free from 001, the code word for the unmentionable, cholera.

It is a relentless, merciless world for the relief workers from all countries, who cannot switch over, as we television viewers can, to the other channel. They deserve our respect and admiration.

Meanwhile, by complete contrast, the Sudan — geographically the area of the whole of Western Europe —consistently accepts refugees across its borders from war-stricken Ethiopia in the east, 250,000 refugees from Uganda in the south, 5,000 from neighbouring Zaire and hundreds of thousands recently from Chad into Darfur in the west.

To do that on a humanitarian basis, and to attempt to assist in settling them away from the borders, deserves the admiration of the Western world. Relief workers go where they are needed and the refugees have equal access to whatever social services are available. Moreover, Government policy favours settling refugees in organised settlements to maximise the provision of the available services.

This is all happening at a time when the Sudan is experiencing its second major drought in 15 years. I was glad that the right hon. Member for Clydesdale referred to forecasting and planning, because there is strong evidence that drought, apparently persistent and endemic to Africa, is linked to long-term changes in Africa's climate.

The process of desertification—caused by a number of factors — must be considered carefully. We must examine such factors as livestock over-grazing, over-cutting for fuel wood purposes and the uncontrolled expansion of human settlements. The latter in its own right may be one of the causes of climatic change, in that it reduces the soil's capacity to store water.

Five of the Sudan's eight administrative regions are affected by the drought, yet the Sudan continues to maintain its open-door policy to refugees. Regional Governments estimate that 4·5 million people are affected in the Sudan, having lost crops or livestock, or both, and as a consequence are unable to provide for themselves adequately without external support. Yet the Sudan continues to maintain its open-door policy.

Among the immediate manifestations of the drought have been food riots as convoys of lorries carry grain through hungry villages to border camps for foreign refugees. A fourfold to fivefold increase in the market price of the main food staple, dura and sorghum, and a sixfold to eightfold drop in the price for livestock in affected regional markets inflame domestic resentment.

In western Sudan, the news of drought in Darfur was known long before this week's radio broadcasts. The Darfur region was declared a disaster zone as long ago as July 1984. A national relief committee was established to

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

combat the effects of drought in that region and in Kordofan. The committee has since evolved into a national high commission for drought and desertification, and it is chaired by the first vice-president. Entire villages in Darfur have been virtually deserted, while others have been left to women, children and the elderly as the men have set forth seeking pastures and employment.

In terms of scale, only the east of the country is worse. Only a month ago, Wad Kowli, a camp which the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central and I visited, was the main refugee camp in the Sudan. It was the final resting place for Ethiopian refugees, many of whom had walked hundreds of miles through war-stricken zones to reach the refugee workers, the unsung heroes who run the camp and minister to the children.

I welcome the news given by the Minister today of increased funding for the Save the Children Fund. Wad Kowli is the fastest growing African city—a city of humble, gentle and dignified people. Compared with having fewer than 20,000 people at Christmas, Wad Kowli sheltered 91,000 on 10 February.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central and I were privileged to be the first Western politicians to meet the new Sudanese leader, who was remarkably frank in his approach to the problems that he faces. He made it clear that the solution to political problems to which reference has been made, with John Garang and the rebel forces in the south, were vital so as to open up the Jonglei canal and get oil flowing once again—action which can only benefit the economic crisis in relation to the $9 billion external debt.

The Sudanese leader said that the Sudan faced a 30 per cent. deficit of food aid and famine relief, and a 60 per cent. deficit of essential seeds for sowing. If these shortages are not made up, the famine crisis will worsen dramatically, in the way that has been visible in recent weeks. In addition, $11 million is needed to ensure water supplies, and new water boreholes are essential to the medium and long-term solution of the problems that we are discussing.

We must reject as nonsense and lamentable ignorance the calls that have been made recently for camp closures. When the rains come, the journey home with limited provisions and the likelihood of heavy mud, swollen rivers and war-stricken zones will prove well nigh impossible for many. Equally, we must fight against "aid fatigue"—the "Why bother, we have done our bit?" attitude in a Western world anaesthetised by television.

We must, as the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) rightly said—I have long supported this stance and will continue to do so—work towards the 0·7 per cent. United Nations target for aid. Above all, we must work for agricultural reform and conditionality between donors and recipients, based on trust and understanding and not imposed insensitively.

I am grateful, in the brief time available for the debate, to have had the opportunity to talk on this subject.

6.16 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) will forgive me if I do not discuss the points that he raised. I wish to be brief, in the knowledge, which I find encouraging, that many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate.

The Minister speaks for a Government who were launched, in the words of the Prime Minister, by a quotation from St. Francis of Assisi. In reflecting on the hon. Gentleman's speech today, we must recall that St. Francis sought to encourage people to understand as much as to be understood. I hope that the Minister will understand, despite the assurances that he offered the House, that we have grave misgivings about Government policy on this whole issue.

Grave reservations exist about the Government's commitment to try to seek a solution to the problem of world poverty. Few of us can be satisfied with the figures that are available. The Minister spoke of £95 million, which is an 18 per cent. cut in real terms in the aid programme since the Conservatives assumed office.

In view of the information that is available and the pictures that we see on our television screens, it is clear that the great anguish in Africa, Asia and the Third world represents a scene that we would be negligent to ignore. It is a picture to which the British people want us to respond. The case for increasing aid is, therefore, already made.

We are entitled to be worried about the quality of aid. Of the £200 million given to Africa, a mere £27 million went to agricultural development. If we are concerned about prestigious projects such as the £74 million spent in Khartoum on a massive building which could have waited for some years, it is clear that we must be concerned about priorities.

Apart from asking Third world countries to deal with the problems of the debt crisis to which the motion refers —to deal with increasing interest charges at a time when commodity prices are going down and to cope with international inflation, which applies as much to them as to us, remembering that it greatly concerns the world recession—we must remember that we have given a commitment to spend amounts on armaments which, I suggest, are unreasonable in the light of the problems that the countries of the Third world are facing. How can we defend an aid budget of £95 million when last year alone we exported £1·8 billion of armaments? The people ask for bread and we send them tanks; they demand water and we send them an arms race. Our priorities are indefensible.

I hope that the Minister understands the anguish of 500 million people—one eighth of humanity—who, every day, experience poverty, misery and deprivation. I hope that, despite the Minister's wish to defend this Government's record, he will accept that the House must give a considered response to the anguish of those people. I hope, too, that, when those people think of the problems that they face, they will forgive us for our collective indifference. I believe that history will find it difficult to do so.

6.20 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): When the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and I stood in refugee camps in Korem and Mekele, one thought more than any other that gripped my mind was that one should not become numb to the reality of what one sees and that the world should not, as famine disasters are seen ever more frequently on television screens, become deadened to reality.

I hope that the House, Britain and the international community will unite in a determination to eradicate hunger, at least by the year 2000. As the hon. Member for

Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) said; we live in a world where cohesion is threatened not by the missile gap but by the gap between the rich nations of the North and the poor nations of the South.

There is nothing inevitable about what I, my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) and others have seen in Africa. Some 20 years ago, famine gripped parts of India. Today, to all intents and purposes, India is self-reliant in food. There is nothing inevitable about saying that we must live with hunger for ever. Nor do we have to accept that the nations of the developed world will always have to feed the nations of Africa. There is nothing inevitable about the feeling that Hercules aircraft will for ever have to fly around Ethiopia.

We should have a simple objective—to make the countries of sub-Saharan Africa food self-reliant, able to feed themselves and to buy on the open market food that they cannot produce themselves. Despite our best will and intentions, until the international community gives the same priority to tackling hunger as it gives to the arms talks in Geneva, we will be unlikely to make progress.

Our main concern is with focus. There is a danger in seeking to give as much aid as possible to Africa while the Soviet Union uses Africa to establish its influence, as, in part, does the United States. The international community must take the responsibility. We must ask ourselves how, as a community, we can best tackle this problem. It is not acceptable for part of the international community to seek to give food aid while another part seeks simply to give arms and to help prosecute a civil war and strife that is undoing much of the work promoted by the other part of the international community. Only when the United Nations has the determination to eliminate hunger will there be any hope of ensuring that sub-Saharan Africa is not still starving in the year 2000.

Britain is in a unique position to take a lead, because it does not seek to carve out spheres of influence in northern Africa. We do not seek, by the sale of arms, to promote our influence throughout the world. We have a unique position in the European Community and in our relationship with the United States.

I hope that hon. Members will stop seeking to divide the House by making cheap political points about whether our aid contribution is 0·35 per cent. or 0·7 per cent. of GNP. Of course resources are important, but it is more important for the House and Britain generally to be determined to eliminate hunger from the world as soon as possible. I hope that we shall achieve that aim within our lifetime. If we do not, the House and Britain will have failed.

6.25 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) expressed the sentiments of most hon. Members. It is right to emphasise the Minister's statement about the image of suffering that created a response by the British people. That response has gone much further than many of us hoped—£60 million or more has been given by the British public to alleviate famine in Africa.

The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, in paragraph 127 of its report on famine in Africa, stated:

> "The generosity of the British people has not been matched by the British Government."

We need to repeat that point and follow the Select Committee's recommendations. In paragraph 128 it stated:

> "We consider that it is not acceptable that almost the entire costs of the UK response to the crisis should fall on the previously agreed ODA budget."

The Select Committee said that an additional provision should be made.

The Select Committee and many hon. Members have stressed the need to develop improved agriculture policies and programmes, to provide assistance for those programmes, and to prevent a recurrence of the present crisis. The Select Committee referred to assistance by the donor communities in various ways for the food producing sector, principally smallholder agricultural and horticultural production. The Minister referred to the successful pioneering scheme developed in Zimbabwe to increase agricultural production.

We need to examine our attitudes towards aid by noting the relationship between the present crisis and the longer-term crisis of agricultural production in Africa because of the obscene agricultural policies that are pursued by Northern and Western countries in the common agricultural policy. By relating the South's agricultural needs to the overdevelopment of the North—especially in the use of large areas of Southern countries to produce cash crops for export to Northern and Western countries—and by concentrating on the real needs of the Southern countries, we shall understand the structural changes that are required, not only in production techniques in Southern countries but in the international balance of trade in agriculture. Northern and Western countries must accept responsibility for the debt crisis and the man-made famine caused by our overconsumption and our commercial systems.

We need to look at only one indicator—indebtedness. In 1973, the ratio of external debts to GDP in non-oil developing countries was 22.4:1; it is now 35:1. To pay off the debts that are often caused by the militarism of the East-West conflict, which also engulfs the South, the developing countries have to expand their cash crops and raw materials for export. That often results in the forcing of self-sufficient farmers off the land, destruction of the environment, and over-intensive development of agri-business methods—all of them Northern inspired.

We need to look again at the ways in which we in Britain, as a member of the European Community, can lend our support to fundamental changes in our own agricultural policy. We need to look at the proposals that have been made by the French for a new Bretton Woods. We need to look in particular at the ways in which domestic reflation within the Northern countries is a contribution to international change as well as to our own obnoxious levels of unemployment.

We need, in particular, to take seriously what the French organisation, Frères des Hommes, said a couple of years ago:

> "A Normandy pig or cow, or a Parisian cat or dog, has a greater purchasing power than landless peasants in the Third World."

As long as we accept that kind of situation and fail to relate the famine and the plight of the Southern countries to our economic system—in particular, to the way in which capitalism has over-exploited Southern countries—we shall not in reality tackle the hunger that faces those Southern countries.

[Mr. D. E. Thomas]

We must take particularly seriously proposals that would gradually reduce the buying of agricultural produce from Southern countries, reduce the development of international sales of that kind, and emphasise the development of food rather than cash crops in those countries.

Rather than introduce aid ourselves, we should as a European Community purchase the produce of those countries, but not for our own use. We should not take delivery of that produce. It should be sent to agreed depots in the producing countries. We should negotiate with the Governments of such countries a method of collection and distribution to ensure that the local people benefit not only from a guaranteed price but from the produce. It is that kind of radical approach to aid that we need if we are to eradicate famine.

6.32 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The debate has been all too short. It has drawn on the experience of many right hon. and hon. Members, some of whom have seen famine at first hand in the Sudan and Ethiopia. The themes have been, among others, our own human responsibility for much of the famine which now faces us, and the civil wars in the Sudan and Ethiopia, the population explosion, the deforestation and — a topic well developed by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas)—our own agricultural policies in the West, which exacerbate the attempts of the developing countries to have their own proper agricultural infrastructure and feed their own people.

The Minister gave a valuable diagnosis of the extent of our aid—the targeting, the speed of response, the need for co-ordinating and the need for a new strategic approach. I should be interested to hear his response to the valuable points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) about storage facilities and a rapid aid deployment force to meet those famine crises which are likely to face us with increasing regularity unless the world community as a whole comes together to meet its human responsibility in relation to those crises.

The Minister failed to put the Government's response in the context of a shrinking aid budget. The hon. Member for Dorset, South (Viscount Cranborne) said, in a rather lofty way, that money is not all, but money can help. The hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) spoke of his commitment to the aid figure of 0·7 per cent. and the need to work towards it. He must realise now that we are moving away from that figure. Last year the United Kingdom's figure was 0·35 per cent. Indeed, it is now down to 0·33 per cent. When the Labour Government left office, the figure was in excess of 5 per cent., and rising.

The aid budget has been consistently cut by the Government since 1979. Comparing the 1985-86 figure with that for 1984-85, one sees that there is a clear cut of at least 3 per cent. in real terms. There has been a cut of no less than 18 per cent. since 1979. In spite of the brave words of the Minister about the importance of science research, the budget of the science unit has been cut, and cut again.

There is a falling percentage of central Government spending on aid, and comparatively our performance, in relation to that of the Development Assistance Committee countries, is very poor. The average development assistance of all non-US DAC countries is 0·45 per cent. of gross national product. Our own figure is now 0·33 per cent. In spite of our colonial traditions and the human relationships within the Commonwealth, which should certainly have put us on a par with France, with a figure in excess of 0·7 per cent., our figure is rather less than three-quarters of the non-US DAC average, and that percentage is falling. That is the reality.

The Minister, as he says, is seeking to obtain greater co-ordination and a more coherent aid strategy. That attempt takes place within a public expenditure programme which, since 1979, has allowed an increase in defence spending of 30 per cent., an increase in the law and order Vote of almost 40 per cent., and an 18 per cent. cut in the aid budget. However skilful the Minister is in redirecting, he is doing it from a much smaller base.

In spite of the brave words of the Government at the Bonn summit and elsewhere, cuts have been made. They are certainly out of tune with public opinion in Britain. The Oxfam public opinion survey at the end of last year showed that only 18 per cent. of those polled were in favour of a lower aid budget. The Government's attitude also has to be contrasted with the magnificent response of our people to the famine in Africa. That point was made eloquently in the Select Committee report on famine in Africa, which has not been touched on as much as it should have been during the debate.

It is clear that the Government's response to the famine in Africa has been based solely on switching funds within a decreasing aid budget, and the Minister cannot resile from that starting point. Apart from the Hercules operation in Ethopia, the money to respond to the unprecedented food crisis in sub-Saharan Africa has come from the existing aid budget. Indeed, from the beginning of February this year, half of the Hercules cost has fallen on the ODA.

The Foreign Affairs Committee contrasted the generosity of the British people with the stony response of the Government and called for substantial new money in the face of the continuing crisis. It is not good enough to say, as the Minister traditionally does, that the money comes from the contingency reserve designed specifically for the purpose, because no contingency reserve within the ODA was designed to meet the scale of human catastrophe that we have seen in sub-Saharan Africa in the past year.

A further fact about the shrinking aid budget is that the debts of the relevant countries have increased because of the background, which is the on-lending of Western banks —that was true of oil money in Latin America in the 1970s—the vast increase in interest rates, and the fall in commodity prices. That means that countries in sub-Saharan Africa have debts in excess of $80 billion. Their debt service is both crippling and leads to distortions within their agricultural economy, as they are encouraged to produce agriculture for servicing those debt requirements rather than to help the poorer farmers in the poorer areas. That has been a consistent theme of many hon. Members. Partly as a result of servicing those debts, there have been the distortions to which the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and others referred.

The Government have honoured the debt cancellation commitments, but they were inherited from the Labour Government, and from the policy of my right hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale of directing aid to the poorest people in the poorest countries. We accept what the

Minister said about rescheduling and writing off debts in some of those areas. However, we should like the Government to lean on the Americans and West Germans, and to follow the example of the retroactive terms adjustment of the old UNCTAD agreement.

Further relevant developments on debt have been the Government's acquiescence in September 1983 to the International Monetary Fund's change of practice on the compensatory financing facility, the food surplus policy of the European Community and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) said in relation to the EC, the fact that the Government took the lead in making cuts in EC food aid. Therefore, there have been cuts, the debt crisis has increased, the need has never been greater, and the general nature of the Government's response has been unfavourable.

Further famines in Africa can be prevented only if there is a decline in the African population or an increase in Africa's per capita food production. Too little of our aid has been directed to the agricultural sector. The Minister knows that the ODA figure for 1983 was only £27 million for project aid for agriculture, £15 million for technical assistance for the same sectors, and £23 million for rural roads, water and electricity, from a total budget of £224 million.

The Government's aid has been increasingly inflexible in terms of the reduction in support for local costs. The Minister will know that between 1980 and 1983 the Government's local costs contribution decreased by 25 per cent. in cash terms, and by more in real terms. I challenge the Minister to deny that figure. There has also been a reduction in programme aid and balance of payments support. Again I challenge the Minister to deny that, because it comes from his Department's figures. The reduction in programme aid since 1979 has been 55 per cent.

The Minister will be aware of the DAC checklist, which was formulated at the end of last year, for concerted action in sub-Saharan Africa. It was meant to be a guidance list for donors. I understand that progress on the checklist, which includes priority for agriculture, has been blocked by the reservations of certain donors. I should like the Minister to confirm that that is the case and that the British Government are not among those who are blocking its implementation.

Essentially, our response has been niggardly. We saw that from the World Bank specialist facility for sub-Saharan Africa, when no extra funds were committed. I hope that the Minister will say something about the Government's response to the International Fund for Agricultural Development, which now seeks replenishment. As the main meeting of IFAD has ended in disarray, will the Government contribute to the proposed special fund for sub-Saharan Africa, which is seeking at least $300 million over four years? Will we make a voluntary contribution in that area, which is the subject matter of our debate?

Clearly, there is a crisis in Africa. Our response has essentially been that of a reactive Government. There have been no initiatives and no moves overall towards the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product. Indeed, our contribution has fallen to 0·3 per cent., and continues to fall. Our contribution to alleviating the famine in Africa, however better targeted, can be seen properly only in the context of a much reduced aid budget.

6.46 pm

Mr. Raison: The House will agree that we have had a good debate this afternoon. I congratulate the Opposition on choosing this subject, if not on the terms of their motion. It has been useful to have a chance to consider what is unquestionably the terrible crisis in Africa. All hon. Members have spoken in the shadow of that crisis.

Some hon. Members spoke with peculiarly close experience, as they have been out to see what is happening on the ground. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) described his experiences of visiting the crisis area. I echo one of his points—that while we rightly pay tribute to the work of our voluntary agencies and the people they send out, we should remember that in the camps of Sudan and Ethiopia there are Sudanese and Ethiopians who are working as dedicatedly, hard and skilfully as those from abroad. That is one of my clearest memories of my visit there.

There has been a good deal of agreement on many aspects of the debate, in particular on the enormous importance of doing all we can to help the small farmers in African countries and other parts of the world which face great difficulties. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), in his brief intervention, rightly pointed out that we have a simple objective—to make sub-Saharan Africa self-reliant in food, able to grow its own crops and to do the bulk of the work in that respect.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett) also spoke about the importance of the small farmer. I share his view that the small farmers of Africa have been derided too much. A growing wisdom recognises that many of the things that small farmers have been doing over the years have been based on experience and a great deal of good sense. Anyone who goes to Africa and thinks that he can simply lecture the small farmer on what he should do without regard to that experience is making a great mistake. Sadly, in many African countries the wisdom of the small farmers has been undermined by absurd ideological policies. However, I believe that wisdom is reasserting itself, and that a greater sense of reality is coming to the countries which have been most committed to the more counter-productive forms of African Socialism, for example. That is of great importance.

The rural development and commercial philosophy argument has been advanced in the debate. The hon. Member for Greenwich alluded to it when he talked about the importance of aid going to the poorest rather than being given on commercial grounds. I suggest that one day he has a quiet word with his hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who as an Opposition trade spokesman seems to have espoused the cause of commercial projects at all costs without making too much of the development value of those projects.

My position is clear. As I have said, it is right that we should look to British interests, and it is right that the bulk of our bilateral aid should be tied. On the other hand, it is essential that, when we use aid funds to support industrial projects, we have proper regard to the developmental significance of those projects. That is the Government's position.

A significant proportion of our aid to Africa is already related to agriculture. That aid is mainly for smallholder development. As the right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) said, aid for agricultural development means financing the local costs of projects as well as

[Mr. Raison]

providing goods from Britain. We have the capacity within our aid programme to provide local costs, where appropriate. That capacity has long existed and it still exists. There is no going back on that. In India, for example, there is a substantial local cost element in our programme. When dealing with imports, we operate on the basis of tied aid, but we provide substantial local costs through the ODA.

The right hon. Member for Clydesdale suggested that there might be a new organisation to bring together the United Nations, the World Bank and major donors, including the European Community, to deal not only with the sudden and desperate famine problems in Africa but with disaster operations generally. I think that the right hon. Lady will know that international machinery——

Dame Judith Hart: The Minister has not described exactly what I have suggested. He had better read *Hansard* tomorrow.

Mr. Raison: As I understand it, the right hon. lady addressed herself to the need, as she sees it, of a new mechanism for dealing with disasters.

Dame Judith Hart: Yes, a new mechanism, not a new organisation.

Mr. Raison: Very well; I am sorry. However, the right hon. Lady will know that the international machinery has been enlarged and greatly improved since the famine in the early 1970s. The United Nations Disaster Relief Office was set up to act as a clearing house. The World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organisation provide regular and detailed information on food aid pledges and shipments and on port and inland transport conditions. We receive a six-page telex from the World Food Programme every week and many documents on food availability from the FAO every month. In dealing with the African crisis we have seen the appointment of Mr. Brad Morse by the United Nations Secretary-General to cope with the emergency operations.

In the Community there is a new ad hoc committee meeting regularly and co-ordinating our bilateral and Community responses. There is also a new emergency unit in the aid directorate of the Community, which was set up last December. All these developments are helping to produce a more effective response. I do not think that they are the totality of the answer, but the mechanisms have improved.

Experience has shown recently that it is possible to get hold of food, thanks to the famous mountains, the surpluses, and their equivalents. We have been able to acquire food quickly. The securing of food has not been one of our problems. I think that the right hon. Member for Clydesdale must recognise that the provision of permanent stocks in every conceivable risk area would be enormously expensive and difficult to maintain. There is ample evidence that the storage of food is far from being an easy matter. There must be some storage facilities and supplies where they are most needed, but more important is an effective mechanism for ensuring that we can get food relatively easily to where it is needed. That is something that we have developed.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) said that in dealing with these problems we must take account of the follies of man as well as of climates. He referred to Eritrea and Tigre and said that we should insist on ceasefires in all the wars that are taking place in Africa. My right hon. Friend is right, but we must remember that we cannot intervene in ways that we would like in countries that are independent. We have supported Mr. Jansson's efforts to arrange a safe passage in Ethiopia. I acknowledge that they have not met with success, but we have pressed hard the importance of treating the starving and the famine-ridden and attaching to that the greatest priority.

It has been suggested that the Community aid programme could be used rather more rigorously to achieve our policy objectives. The new Lomé convention allows greater policy dialogue and gives a greater change to achieve policy changes, which is all to the good. The Community has made it clear that in the last resort it will suspend aid where there is gross abuse of human rights. However, we are operating on behalf of the people of independent countries. We cannot walk in, tell them what to do and resume the colonial burden.

The essence of what we are about is to give effective aid. It is important to remember that we are giving aid in Africa and in other areas where there are desperate problems, such as Afghanistan, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Viscount Cranborne) referred. As my hon. Friend knows, we have provided substantial aid for Afghanistan. I have allocated a further £4 million to help the refugees in that area who are suffering so tragically.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) talked about the credit scheme operated by the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that that is an important job. The work is promising and we support the scheme through our membership of the International Fund for Agricultural Development. We are fully prepared to take part in the next replenishment of IFAD, and we regret the fact that the negotiations have been stalled. We hope that they will be resumed as soon as possible. We hope also that the Americans will find their way to coming in on terms which can be agreed among us all. When I go to Washington in the next day or so I shall be prepared to convey that message. It will be sensible to achieve the replenishment and then to consider what to do next about any further activities.

We have heard a good deal during the debate about targets and resources. We operate under public expenditure constraints, and we can hardly counsel sound finance to the developing countries if we do not practise it ourselves. However, we have a substantial programme that is running at roughly the overall average of OECD countries. More important than that, perhaps, is the scope and direction of our aid programme. It is too easy to think that aid is a matter of throwing in resources. Some of the parrot cries that we hear do no good to anybody. If there is one lesson on aid, it is that the policies of aid programmes must be right. Above all, that is true in Africa, where the problems are most severe.

It is fair to say that Africa has not lacked aid over the post-war years and that it does not lack it now. However, I firmly believe that there must be a workable strategy. That strategy is not to be found in Socialism. African Socialism is one of the burdens that has afflicted that continent. A workable strategy must be found in realistic policies that tackle the great needs of Africa. There must

be co-ordination between donors and sensible economic policies. Incentives must be given to key producers, notably the farmers. There must be research into the best ways of growing food and rearing livestock, and the results of that research must be disseminated. There is a need for appropriate technology. There is a need to get to grips with enfeebling bureaucracy. There must be a recognition that development will not come without scope for private investment, the operation of markets and resistance to protectionism.

We are now seeing policies emerge—this is true of the major institutions such as the World Bank and our bilateral partners as well as ourselves — which are designed to cope effectively with the fundamental and long-term problems which so afflict Africa.

Therefore, I urge the House to reject the Opposition motion and to support the amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 182, Noes 277.

Division No. 235] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Coleman, Donald
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McGuire, Michael
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan McKay and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh

Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the effectiveness of the Government's action in tackling the famine in Africa; endorses its policies to promote long term development in Africa; supports the present approach of the Government and the international financial institutions to the severe debt problems of the day; and recognises that Britain's aid policy confers real benefits not only on the developing countries but also on British industry and employment.

Young People

7.13 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I beg to move,

That this House, mindful of the fact that 1985 is the International Year of Youth, believes that Her Majesty's Government has failed to foster conditions for opportunity, choice and participation for young people and has contributed to the desperate plight of youth by failing to operate the policies necessary to assist young people in securing work, housing, income and social security; and believes that all young people, regardless of sex and social background, have a right to effective education and training in order to give them wide and continuing opportunities to secure fulfilling employment and the consequent economic and social rewards.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Sheerman: It is sad, but hardly surprising, that the organisers of the International Year of Youth should criticise the Government for their miserable support of the year. They have provided a measly £250,000 for the whole year's efforts. That figure should be compared with the Canadian Government's provision of £8 million and the Greater London council's provision of £160,000. That is exactly the type of helpful and progressive use of resources which has led the Government to pursue its abolition. We all know that having to watch an alternative in action upsets the Prime Minister even more than hearing about it.

The Government regard youth as an embarrassment and a liability. Faced with the crisis of youth unemployment, which is substantially of their own making, Ministers have rained blows and blame on young people. Youth should be an exciting and fulfilling time of life. Throughout the ages, poets have celebrated and revered youth.

"Youth's the season made for joys"

wrote John Gay. Byron also dwelt on the sweetness of youth:

"Oh, talk not to me of a name great in story;
The days of our youth are the days of our glory;
And the myrtle and ivy of sweet two-and-twenty;
Are worth all your laurels, though ever so plenty."

[Interruption.] It is not surprising that the Government Front Bench cannot understand why poetry should be quoted in a debate on young people.

Politicians also have known the value of youth. It was Disraeli who proclaimed that almost everything that is great has been done by youth and who described the youth of the nation as the trustees of its posterity. He might have added the word "prosperity" if he lived now. How unlike the poets and politicians of an earlier age are the present Government. They have no vision of youth. What policy they have is merely a combination of saving money and political expediency, screened by a veneer of callous and insincere celebration of Victorian family values.

We all know that the most important step in becoming an adult and taking on the responsibilities of life is having a job. Being in work gives young people independence and a new status. It gives them the money to make their own choices and introduces them to new relationships with friends at work. It enables them to move away from independence on their families. For most young people, a job is their most important possession. However, too few young people have jobs or have been able to build the right foundations for work.

The old passes to an adult place in society no longer exist. Hon. Members, especially Opposition Members, understand that. The new ones such as the youth training scheme too often lead back to the dole queue. Unless society can create jobs for young people and help them to prepare for jobs through high quality education and training, it is denying opportunities to a whole generation. All right hon. and hon. Members have had such opportunities aplenty.

I shall return to jobs, and I do not apologise for that. Unless the Government are willing to sort out the problem of jobs, there will be no end to the miseries that youth endures. The bottom line is that, if the fundamental problems facing young people are to be put right, the economy must be put right. Our shrinking manufacturing sector cannot provide sufficient jobs for unemployed youth directly or in service occupations. If manufacturing continues to shrink, as John Harvey-Jones said, what on earth will they service? Our economy needs the skills and energies of youth to help make it successful.

It has been estimated that putting the under-25s back to work would produce a saving of between £5 billion and £7 billion a year in public expenditure. That is one public expenditure cut that we would favour. An even greater sum would be saved by the additional output of those employed young people. Treated as a liability, youth has become one. Youth is an asset, but the Government have been unwilling to capitalise on it.

I shall consider the desperate plight of young people under the four major headings of jobs, education and training, income and housing.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Peter Morrison): Will the hon. Gentleman explain precisely how he arrived at the figure of £5 billion to £7 billion?

Mr. Sheerman: The Minister will hear later of particular proposals. That figure was arrived at by an independent assessment made in the Labour party. I shall give him the figures from independent bodies if he cares to have them.

Let us talk about the plight of youth in terms of jobs —*[Interruption.]* I am not proud of those figures. This is a most desperate—*[Interruption.]* If Ministers looked at the findings of the Unemployment Unit, they would find the figure of £5 billion to £7 billion, which was worked out by that unit. The Minister of State knows well of the existence of that unit. From 1979—*[Interruption.]* The Government Front Bench is trying to stop me giving the catalogue of the dreadful unemployment figures, but I shall continue.

Between 1979 and 1985 unemployment among all under 25-year-olds was up 167 per cent. For under 18-year-olds, it was up 77 per cent. For under 18-year-olds, including YTS trainees, it was up 168 per cent. For under 25-year-olds, the rate of unemployment was over double what it was for the rest of the population, at 22·7 per cent., compared with 10·3 per cent. for those over 25. In April 1985 1,203,000 people under 25 were out of a job. That is a dreadful catalogue of figures, especially if we add the fact that 359,000 of those people had been unemployed for 12 months or more, and 655,805 had been unemployed for six months or more. Although the totals for the past couple of years are holding relatively steady, the duration of unemployment is increasing markedly and worryingly.

School leavers' jobs and apprenticeships have also collapsed. Most tragic of all is the figure for young people

[Mr. Sheerman]

who have not worked at all since leaving school. For example, 152,795 of those over 19 have never worked in their lives. That is a dreadful figure, and one that we shall pay for dearly in the years to come. Those young people despair of any hope or future.

The Government are fond of saying that apprenticeships were out of date and produced out-of-date skills, and that they were time served rather than standard served. We have heard the catalogue of criticism about apprenticeships. However, the fact is that all over the world one can hear the praise for our apprenticeship system, which has provided skilled workers for industries in the United States and many other parts of the world. That system has been allowed to collapse. Even in 1978 we did not have enough apprenticeships. There were 86,000 male apprentices, and the figure reduced to 70,500 in 1980. However, by 1983 the figure was down to 22,000. What a record of skill training for a nation that has hopes of being a great industrial nation again.

Ministers are fond of reminding us that the YTS is a training measure, not an employment measure, so I shall deal with youth training separately. The only direct policies aimed at reducing youth unemployment are the wicked attempts to lower young people's wages, and to create jobs through the community programme. I confess that the community programme remains fairly popular, but the paltry wages—on average under £60 a week—are fast becoming a national scandal. In any event, the programme only scratches the surface of demand. I hope that the Minister will intervene if he disagrees with this. Even the increased 100,000 places on community schemes announced in the Budget will serve the needs of only less than 10 per cent. of eligible people under 25, who are out of work.

The Government's favourite claim is that it is not the Government's fault that there are no jobs. Their inadequate policies are not to blame. They are nothing to do with youth unemployment, according to Ministers and the Prime Minister. Young people are unemployed because it is their own fault. Unbeknown to them, they have been pricing themselves out of jobs for years. That is why there are no jobs. I would find that hilarious if it were not so tragic.

The Government have made much of "high" youth wages and have enlisted the YTS allowance alongside the —almost—late and wholly unlamented young workers scheme in support. However, the evidence is so thin as to be laughable. Research has been commissioned in a desperate attempt by the Government to find some evidence to back their prejudices on the matter. All the independent research that I have seen makes it clear that the Government's alleged relationship between high youth pay and the lack of jobs is nonsense. Of course, the Government find that proposition politically attractive.

The wages council proposals will further attack young people's ability to earn a decent living. There will be further moves in line with the idea that youth are to blame for their predicament, which is an amoral position for a Government to hold. Young people are the victims rather than the perpetrators, but they are blamed for the crisis. It is not youth, demographic trend or international competition that is to blame for youth unemployment—it is the Government's policies. In the debate, we hope to make it clear in the public imagination that the Government are responsible for the unemployment and despair of our young people.

The Government have failed to meet the challenge of education and training. Her Majesty's inspectorate has confirmed beyond doubt that our schools are crumbling from neglect. The leader in *The Times Educational Supplement* of 31 May is entitled

"False economy and penny-pinching".

How appropriate that is to the present Government's policies and the present Secretary of State. The leader states:

"Working in decaying conditions amid peeling paint, under leaking roofs, unable to get defects repaired let alone improvements undertaken, is one of the most widespread complaints from teachers. As time goes by, working in a poor environment becomes more and more depressing and less and less conducive to high morale and the enthusiasm which lights up enthusiasm in others."

Something else is far more telling against the Government's lack of understanding of what is happening in education today. The Secretary of State for Education and Science and his fellow Ministers do not have the imagination to understand, even when the teaching unions are reluctantly taking industrial action in support of their living standards. The teachers are doing so because it is a crime that they cannot do their job on their present rates of pay and in present conditions. The nature of education changes when there is mass youth unemployment. The Government do not have the imagination to know what the role of a teacher is, who used to teach a class of young men and women who confidently expected to get a job when they left school. Until a few years ago, they all would have done that. Let the Government compare that with trying to teach young people who know that there is no job, no future, and no opportunities when they leave school at 16. That is the measure of the Government's lack of understanding of today's education system. Until our economy provides the possibility of a job, there will be no hope for education and training. The Government have completely failed to meet that challenge.

The decay referred to in *The Times Educational Supplement* affects morale. For teachers to realise that there is little prospect of jobs for their pupils affects morale even more. The output from the system shows how badly we are lagging behind our industrial competitors. That is part of the bind we are in. The Government must be aware that we must improve our education system and have a proper training system that compares with that of Germany, Japan, the United States and our other industrial competitors and that we must move to a level of quality training and education. If we have any sense, we must do that in conditions of expansion and not contraction. It is difficult to achieve any change in an atmosphere of decline and cuts.

Britain lags behind its major competitors in every aspect of education and training. Just one third of its work force has any recognised qualifications equivalent to at least O-level, compared with about two thirds in West Germany. A high proportion of our 16-year-olds leave school with no prospects of genuine vocational preparation. That is in striking contrast to Germany and Japan. Only 13 per cent. of our school leavers go on to higher education, compared to one fifth in West Germany.

Our entry into higher education is lower than that of other countries. The recent Green Paper only squares the circle between places and demand by predicting levels of

demand that fail to accord with the predictions of those who have no expenditure axe to grind. The Government also fail to see that the object should be to encourage and stimulate demand for higher education and to support all those who want to improve their learning and the value of their contribution to society.

Then we come to the co-called jewel in the Government's crown — YTS. We find that it is not a jewel. Most people's assessment is that it is a bad imitation paste. That must be said without embarrassment. I know that the Government will say that the Opposition are being disloyal to youth, because we criticise a training programme that is not good enough for our young people, our international competitiveness or the country's future. To see the problems of YTS is not disloyalty. It is disloyalty not to recognise those problems.

I have recently visited a number of mode A schemes. I may not have visited as many as the Minister of State. I understand from the grapevine that when I visit those schemes I do something that the Minister does not do. I ask for the trainees to talk to me on their own without their supervisors, teachers or anyone else.

Mr. Peter Morrison *rose*——

Mr. Sheerman: I may be wrong about that. When one sees the trainees in a relaxed and informal atmosphere, one hears the central criticisms of even the mode A scheme about which the Minister brags so frequently. With his hand on his heart, the Minister must accept that most of the schemes that he studies involve work experience and not quality training. We must move to quality training and not merely job experience.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be reassured when I tell him that that is not the fact.

Mr. Sheerman: The problem with YTS is that it leads to jobs for only half the trainees. The Government say ——

Mr. Peter Morrison: Wrong.

Mr. Sheerman: I shall stand by that statement. Roughly half the trainees obtain a job. In many parts of the country, hardly any trainees obtain a job. My information on this is as good as the Minister's. The Government say, "Yes, but only half are unemployed." Wonderful — that is the difference between us. The Government congratulate themselves on a job that is only half done. We want to start doing that job for our young people properly.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Tell us the figures.

Mr. Sheerman: The Government do not have the figures.

Secondly, the training is not of sufficient quality or any replacement for the apprenticeship schemes, the skillcentres or the industrial training boards. Thirdly, the YTS is being done on the cheap. When the YTS was launched, we were told many times that it would cost £1 billion. That is how much the Government were spending on YTS. Ministers crowed about that figure, but now we know that that £1 billion must pay for two years of YTS rather than just one. If, as the Opposition want, YTS is to be a stepping stone into quality training which matches that anywhere in the world, it will cost money. We cannot train on the cheap. The money must come from the employer, the individual or the Government. The Government have not faced that problem.

I shall deal with the plight of youth in respect of income. First, under this Government, mass family poverty has grown. In total, the number of children living on incomes below subsistence — supplementary benefit level — almost doubled in the first two years of this Government. A combination of growing unemployment, leading more families to depend upon supplementary benefit, and low pay means that one in four children were living in or near the margins of poverty in 1981. The proportion of working parents earning poverty wages has increased in recent years, and the number of children living with working parents on incomes below 140 per cent. of supplementary benefit level more than doubled in the two years to 1981. So much for the Government's celebration of the values of the family. That is how most of the families that we see in our constituencies suffer.

Moreover, young people's standards of living are falling, whether they are on a wage, a training allowance or a student grant, without a grant and having to rely on parents, or on the dole. The Government are like the famous advertisement: they manage to reach parts that no other Government have managed to reach. In terms of delivering poverty, that is not funny.

For the vast majority of young people wishing to continue in full-time education, there are no grants or educational maintenance allowances. sayhat is something for which the Opposition have called for many years and which we are committed to introducing once we are in government. Only those whose parents can afford to keep them can continue in full-time study. The Government have stubbornly refused to provide young people under 18 with grants. It is all right for the Secretary of State to tell us what we did or did not do, but the Labour Government did not have the same level of youth unemployment. We did not have the young unemployed school leaver having to decide whether to stay at school to do his or her A-levels, to obtain a vocational qualification or to take £26.25 home to the family budget because mum and dad are unemployed. That is the terrible tension that exists in many families, and it is one that we must recognise.

Students aged 18 or more are denied grants if they are not on higher education or specially designated courses. Grants for part-time study are non-existent. The value of student grants has fallen by 14 per cent. More students have to rely on parental contributions or are forced to borrow money from the banks. The Government have threatened to introduce student loans—pay as you learn. They have already tried, unsuccessfully, to charge parents course fees.

People on the youth training scheme are paid a totally inadequate allowance of £26·25 per week. Only a very few trainees manage to get that topped up through collective bargaining, and supplementary benefit is cut if trainees leave early. Anyone who has studied the White and Green Papers carefully knows that the spectre of withdrawal of benefit entirely from 16 and 17-year-olds probably merely awaits implementation of the second year of the youth training scheme. I should like to hear the Government's response on that.

Those changes in benefit come at the end of a whole series of changes designed to force young people back on to the resources of their families. I can give chapter and verse. In 1980, supplementary benefit was removed from

[Mr. Sheerman]

school leavers for three to four months. In 1982, child benefit entitlement was reduced. In April 1983, 16 and 17-year-olds lost £3·10 per week housing benefit. That was extended to 18 to 20-year-olds in 1984. The catalogue of blows against young people is as depressing as it is possible to imagine.

The current reviews of the social security system will create ludicrous anomalies between the under-25s and the over-25s, so that a couple with a 24-year-old son or daughter will receive a different level of benefit from that received by the couple next door whose child is 25 years old. The Government have totally failed to tackle the tangle of benefits and incomes for young people, and further cuts in benefits for 16 and 17-year-olds are likely.

The plight of youth is equally desperate in housing. The decline of the private rented sector and the failure of the public sector to provide for the young and particularly for young single people has pushed them to the back of the housing queue in every area. As a result, housing problems among young people are on the increase and the unprecedented number of homeless young people is a national disgrace.

The pressure is building up, as reports from around the country show. I cite just a few instances. Between 1984 and 1985, Threshold had 1,500 new inquiries from persons under 25. Flatshop in Cardiff had 1,600 inquiries in 1983, 64 per cent. of them from people aged between 18 and 25 and 8 per cent. of them from people under the age of 18. The Association for the Single Homeless noted that between June 1983 and April 1984 79 per cent. of the homeless were under 24 years of age. Every year, 14,000 youngsters leave local authority care. It is estimated half of them end up homeless, but three out of four local authorities offer no assistance for priority allocation after leaving establishments of that kind and many local authorities maintain housing policies which operate against young people.

I have covered jobs, income, education, training and housing because they are the fundamental stepping stones for youth in moving to a full, worthwhile and secure place in adult society. The Government have not only failed to support those stepping stones but have actually weakened them in many respects. That is the measure of their culpability for the desperate plight of young people today.

The Minister may ask what Labour would do. I will tell him. First, Labour has a vision of youth.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Tom King): Yes?

Mr. Sheerman: Yes indeed, and we understand young working people in a way that Ministers with their privileged backgrounds cannot begin to appreciate.

At the heart of our policy is an appreciation of the value of youth. Youth does not last very long and it is a crime to deprive young people of all the things that the Government are taking away from them. Youth is a time to be enjoyed, a time to look forward with hope, a time of opportunity. Young people should be able to look to their families for help and mutual support, but they should also be allowed and indeed helped to work towards the essential independence and learning of life entailed by the responsibilities of adult living.

What is needed is a framework for that transition—not to mollycoddle young people but to give them something to build on and to build with—and it is the responsibility of Government to develop that framework. One element is jobs. Labour has set out its programme for getting the country and its young people back to work in "A Future that Works" and "Partners in Rebuilding Britain".

A second element is the education system. We have set out our proposals for that in our charter for pupils and parents. Thirdly, for education and training after the age of 16 we have "Learning for Life" and "Plan for Training". Fourthly, for income support we have set out our commitment to educational maintenance allowances, increased grants and a much improved grant for trainees. We also have a series of policy options to improve the housing prospects of young people, including more opportunities for rented housing, easier access to housing waiting lists and an extension of priority housing need to cover young people.

I have no doubt that the Government today will trot out the usual litany of excuses for their inadequacy, incompetence and indifference to the problems of young people, but however they twist and turn and squeal, as Harry Truman said, the buck stops there. The Government are responsible for what is happening to our young people and for the despair that those young people feel.

7.46 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Peter Morrison): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"recognising that 1985 is the International Year of Youth, congratulates the Government on the action it is taking to improve the prospects for young people and, in particular, for introducing through the Youth Training Scheme the most imaginative and far reaching training programme since the last war; recognises the tremendous opportunities the scheme has created for young people and looks forward with confidence to the introduction of the two-year Youth Training Scheme in April 1986; and welcomes the initiative being taken to provide more effective education for young people."

I was surprised that the Opposition chose to have a debate on youth, but I was also very pleased because their record when in government was not impressive, as what has been said today has shown. I intend to show that, despite the comments of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), the Government's record is impressive. The hon. Gentleman may live to regret his statement that we have no vision. The hon. Gentleman began his speech with a little poetry. He also praised Mr. Livingstone, but I wonder how many youngsters under the GLC have that sort of praise for that sort of man.

The hon. Gentleman's speech was very short on facts, and he was wrong about many facts. For example, he said that only 50 per cent. of those leaving the youth training scheme go into a job. He knows the facts because they have been debated before, so he knows that the figure is about 60 per cent., a further 6 per cent. going on to further training and education and another 5 per cent. going on to another scheme.

Mr. Sheerman: Perhaps the Minister will check his figures with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission who is also uncertain about the figures because they are accumulated merely by survey. The figure that we have and that Youthaid has is 50 per cent.

Mr. Morrison: It is extraordinary that the hon. Gentleman should take what Youthaid says as official

when it has been proved time and again to be factually incorrect. It is also extraordinary that members of the Youth Training Board, not all of whom are members of the Conservative party by any stretch of the imagination, do not question the facts given to them by the Manpower Services Commission. The figures are obtained through an independent survey, so factually the hon. Gentleman is incorrect.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield says that Labour has a vision of youth. That is fine. But what does he intend to do with that vision? I listened carefully to everything that he said, but he did not put forward even one new idea. That is the position of the Labour party. It has no ideas —*[Interruption.]* Labour Members may not like the fact that they have no ideas, but they cannot bluster their way out of it. Rhetoric is one thing, but constructive ideas are something else. The Labour party is good on rhetoric but bad on constructive ideas. I want to hear ideas about how one gets through a difficult situation such as this, and I have not for a moment pretended that it is anything other than difficult.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield forgot to remind the House that when in government the Labour party had the chance to introduce a youth training scheme. It was put forward by the then Secretary of State for Education and Science, who is now president of the Social Democratic party. She has vividly reminded us of the way in which the Labour Government at the time totally failed to put youth and the necessary resources up the list of priorities. As a result, many 19, 20, 21 and 22-year-olds have never had a job or any training at all. Had the Labour party had the courage at the time, it would have placed those 19 to 24-year-olds in a quite different situation.

I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman spends time on the youth training scheme. As he knows, I also spend a lot of time on it and have talked to many trainees. The hon. Gentleman's experience is interesting. He said that young people were not very keen on the scheme. I have not met all the 700,000 trainees who have benefited from the scheme, but I have met a good cross-section and heard quite a different story. However, the hon. Gentleman need not believe me or perch on my shoulder as I go around the various schemes, even though I would be delighted if he came with me. Perhaps he will look again at an independent survey, which is about to go to the Youth Training Board, with which I have had nothing whatever to do. That was a survey of trainees as they came off the scheme, and many were interviewed. It showed that 84 per cent. thought that the scheme was either fairly or very worthwhile. By any stretch of the imagination, that must be an extremely successful, positive rate. I believe that about 15,000 trainees took part in the survey, but if I am wrong I shall correct that figure if I have over-exaggerated or even under-exaggerated.

Just the other day, in conjuction with the Industrial Society, we met the trainees of the year. Had the hon. Gentleman attended that meeting, he would have heard the success stories and met trainees who after some years had changed their attitude and got themselves into employment. One trainee was offered a job provided he had a driving licence. He did not, but, because of his attitude, he obtained a driving licence within 10 days and became employed.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The Minister will be aware that earlier this year at a conference in Bradford there was extensive criticism of racial discrimination within the YTS. He acknowledges that he is aware of that, but what action do the Government propose to take to diminish the level of such discrimination with the YTS, and when will the hon. Gentleman announce the Government's proposals?

Mr. Morrison: If there is any racial discrimination, the same rules and regulations apply up and down the land. I assure the hon. Gentleman that if I hear of specific cases, they will be looked into immediately, and he can also be assured that the right statute is in place so that that should not happen.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield misled the House when he said that we had cut back on YTS. He quoted a figure of £1 billion. We are now spending £830 million on the scheme this year, and it will go up by a further £300 million during the period of the full two-year scheme. But the hon. Gentleman did not acknowledge that for the last two years, the current year and the year ahead, every 16 and 17-year-old school leaver will have the opportunity of joining the scheme if he wishes. That is no cutback at all. Originally the guarantee covered all 16-year-olds, but we have now given the opportunity to every 17-year-old. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman cannot argue that there has been any cutback. Furthermore, there is common ground between us in our wish to see better quality training throughout industry and commerce—*[Interruption.]* It is obvious that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has nothing constructive to offer.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Of course we have alternatives.

Mr. Morrison: I hope that the hon. Member for Huddersfield will agree that there is training in many industrial and commercial sectors as a result of YTS which did not exist previously.

We have also moved away from outdated time-serving and age restrictions which were a feature of traditional apprenticeships. Many trade unionists believe that that was the right way to proceed. I am sorry that the Opposition Front Bench do not appear to believe that, because they are precluding many school leavers aged 17, 18 and perhaps 19 of getting the right sort of training.

Education and industry have been brought much closer together as a result of YTS. That is to the benefit not only of education and industry, but, perhaps more importantly, of 16 and 17-year-olds.

Mr. Prescott: How many apprentices were recruited under the normal industrial training boards in 1979, and how does that compare with the figure today?

Mr. Morrison: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the precise figures of the number of apprentices, but the number of the traditional apprentices has dropped.

Mr. Prescott: By what order?

Mr. Morrison: By a substantial amount, but while the number of traditional apprentices has fallen, the number of people who, as a result of YTS, have obtained basic training has increased very substantially. I shall come back to the question of apprentices later in my speech.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Does the hon. Gentleman disagree that between 1979 and 1983 the number of apprenticeships fell from 155,000 to about 90,000? Should we not look at the West German system and introduce statutory apprenticeships?

Mr. Morrison: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and I shall come on to that subject at the end of my speech.

Contrary to what the Opposition have put forward—which, as far as I can see, is nothing at all—what we have suggested for YTS is more imaginative than any other training initiative since the war. Therefore, every school leaver aged 16 or 17 has the chance of being trained for the first time——

Mr. Prescott: Rubbish.

Mr. Morrison: I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's letter to me in a moment, which might annoy him even more. In the past, only a privileged minority went into the apprentice system.

However, the Government do not rest on their laurels. They are introducing the two-year youth training scheme, which will enhance for 16-year-olds the opportunity of obtaining employment. It could not have happened if we did not have the support of the employers and the unions. Perhaps Opposition Members are no longer worried about the support of the unions for the youth training scheme. It would not have happened without the good relationships that exist between the colleges and the training providers. I am glad to say that, although it is still early days, progress towards the two-year scheme is set fair. That will mean a better-trained work force than hitherto. The fact that we have not had a well-trained work force has meant that we have lost some markets to our overseas competitors and, as a result, lost jobs.

The White Paper on education and training for young people emphasises for the first time the importance of a unified approach to training and education for all 14 to 18-year-olds. It links, crucially, schools and industry. It is extremely depressing — I hope that the Opposition spokesman can do something about it — that some Labour-controlled local education authorities will not jump aboard the technical and vocational education initiative. Perhaps when the hon. Gentleman talks with his colleagues in local government he will encourage them to do so. If they do no take part in the initiative, they will deprive the youngsters in their areas of a vocational education that would certainly benefit them.

Mr. Prescott: I encourage everyone to do what they can about training. I should tell the Minister that Labour authorities are fulfilling the training requirements which the Manpower Services Commission is not fulfilling in many areas. One should give credit for the amount of resources allocated to training by local authorities, which compares well with the amount given by Tory authorities. Indeed, the Minister said today that the Labour authority in Southampton stepped in to save the training centre there.

Mr. Morrison: I accept the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's intervention. However, he must know that some Left-wing local education authorities will not enter the technical and vocational education initiative. I do not know why they are not interested in it, but they are depriving the 14 and 15-year-olds in their areas——

Mr. Prescott: Rubbish.

Mr. Morrison: It is not rubbish. It is true. They are depriving 14 and 15-year-olds of the opportunity to have such training. The hon. Gentleman will also know that some Left-wing local authorities will not take part in the community programme. I wonder why. Are they not worried about the long-term unemployed?

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the Minister accept that if the Government were prepared to make the TVEI money available to all schools it might benefit all school leavers? Many local authorities are worried about the divisiveness of the scheme, whereby money is given to one school but not to another. They believe that that increases the problems of the allocation of children among different schools.

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that about £250 million has been spent on the initiative. It is suitable for only some local educational authorities, and it is only a pilot scheme. It must be worth the while of every local authority to try it on a pilot basis. However, for party political reasons, some Labour-controlled local education authorities have not done so.

For some time, the Opposition have criticised the youth training scheme. Indeed, their opposition seemed a little more shrill this evening. I agree that the quality of the scheme is crucial. On 11 March, when we debated this matter, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East mentioned that point. He will recall that I wrote to him a day or two later saying that if he could suggest schemes that did not rate according to quality, I would examine them immediately. On 1 April—I do not know whether the date is significant—he replied:

"Thank you for your letter dated 14 March offering to look into any training schemes which I find unsatisfactory. The one involving shifting cardboard boxes around"—

this is the case which he mentioned in the House—

"is actually run by a Tory councillor and I have sorted the matter out myself, though I still think the training is not up to standard and I have discussed the matter with some of your officers."

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that. He continues:

"I am compiling a number of criticisms of the Youth Training Scheme and will make you aware of my case as soon as I have it ready to my satisfaction."

The hon. Gentleman raised the matter in a bland, rhetorical statement on 11 March. He wrote to me on 1 April, but nine weeks later some schemes have become one scheme and the hon. Gentleman has not produced a shred of evidence.

Mr. Prescott: The case to which I referred that evening occurred in a business run by a Tory councillor. I did sort it out. It concerned the exploitation of a young worker. Other examples have come to my attention, and the Minister must know that we intend to produce a report by October—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] We shall produce a report not only about the youth training scheme, but about training in general and about getting people back to work. After we have produced that report, we should have a proper statement from the Minister. He seems to accept the success of the scheme, although little evidence has been produced to show that, on surveys of between 1,000 and 5,000 people. He is obviously easily satisfied. The Minister participated in a BBC programme about the YTS during which youngsters on the scheme made it clear that they believed that it was cheap labour and that they wanted nothing to do with it.

Mr. Morrison: Again, the hon. Gentleman has not produced concrete examples. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I am not complacent. If my Department receives a complaint, my officials know that they must resolve it

within 24 hours, or explain their failure to do so. The hon. Gentleman is the official Opposition spokesman on employment, yet he makes bland statements and, after two and a half months, he cannot give me more than one example of abuse. The youngsters on the youth training scheme will note that he cannot give me more than one example. If the hon. Gentleman has concrete examples, I shall consider them immediately. I am amazed that he cannot give me one today.

The knockers of the scheme, of whom the hon. Gentleman is one, include the British Youth Council. When it gave evidence to the Select Committee, it made similar remarks, and it wrote a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) stating:

"In response to a request of the Select Committee on Employment held 17 April 1985 and your recent comments in the House of Commons. I am writing to inform you that the British Youth Council will be furnishing you with the names of 'Bad Schemes' at the end of June 1985."

If the council knows of bad schemes, why does it not tell us immediately? It is common ground between the hon. Gentleman and me that we should improve schemes where possible. If we know of bad schemes, we shall do so. To make such bland statements is not acceptable.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) referred to health and safety. He will recall that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) introduced a Bill which dealt with health and safety. The hon. Gentleman had not taken into account the fact that the Government have covered all health and safety matters in legislation. What is just as important is that every trainee on the scheme has statutory protection against racial discrimination in the selection for and termination of training. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is satisfied that the necessary legislation is in force, as it should be.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East referred to the placement of trainees. When I first went to the Department of Employment the placement rate on the youth opportunities programme was 30 per cent. The Labour Government's youth opportunities programme was successful. Today, the placement rate is about 60 per cent., with a further 6 per cent. going into further training and education and over 5 per cent. going into another scheme. Good placements are not necessarily achieved in the areas where one expects them to be achieved. In parts of the country where there are high levels of unemployment there have been placement rates of 70, 80 and 90 per cent.

Mr. Sheerman *rose*——

Mr. Morrison: However, the hon. Member for Huddersfield has never addressed himself to the point that no Government have the power to ordain that a job should be provided at the end of the youth training scheme. The hon. Gentleman and all trainees know that a job exists only when a product is created at a cost and of a quality that the consumer wants to buy.

The hon. Gentleman referred to wages and the allowance. He will have talked to trainees, as I have, and the answer that I receive is, "We get by." Of course they would like more money, but when it is put to them that the more that they receive by way of an allowance the less will be spent on their training, because there is no pot of gold at the end of this rainbow, they begin to understand that the training element—the quality of the scheme—is crucial.

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): Will my hon. Friend comment upon the announcement by the Manpower Services Commission of its intention to employ clerical assistants as trainees at £60 a week? Does that not undermine the laudable efforts of the Government to persuade young people to take realistic training allowances? If everybody were to copy the MSC, there would be a substantial reduction in the number of young people who would be able to take advantage of the youth training scheme.

Mr. Morrison: Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler), I read the report, and it came as a surprise to me, too. I made inquiries about it. My hon. Friend and I agree that wages or allowances are relevant in terms of prospective employment. Like my hon. Friend, I do not believe everything that I read in *The Times*.

On apprentices, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, is out of step with another of his supporters. Look at what happened in the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union. It agreed that the pay of apprentices should be reduced from £41·63 to £27·88. The result was that the intake of apprentices trebled. But there is still a long way to go.

Mr. Sheerman: That is a most fraudulent claim. I have checked this with the EETPU and with the employers. The package for the three and four-year period provides a higher rather than a lower income over that period. There is merely a reduction in the starting rate. However, there is an overall increase. To equate low wages with more apprentices is to turn logic on its head.

Mr. Tom King: By George, he's got it.

Mr. Morrison: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment says, "By George, he's got it."

Despite the fact that this is an enlightened development, there is still a long way to go. The Liberal spokesman pointed to West Germany where first-year apprentices earn about 20 to 30 per cent. of the adult rate compared with the average rate of 60 per cent. in this country. The result is that about 50 per cent. of school leavers in West Germany become apprentices compared with about only 5 per cent. in this country. The Opposition fail to take that matter on board.

Mr. Prescott: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morrison: No. I have given way on many occasions, and I know that many hon. Members want to take part in this debate.

During the last three years the Government have introduced a new training scheme which is universally popular and very successful. It is sad that some people are trying to encourage youngsters not to join the scheme. The Government have introduced a community programme that provides training, the technical and vocational education initiative and the enterprise allowance scheme, all of which are imaginative and relate to the 14 to 25-year-old age group. The provision of proper education and training for young people is vital both for them and for the future prosperity of this country. The measures that I have outlined represent the most wide-ranging programme of reforms that has been produced for many years.

I commend the amendment to the House.

8.17 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): About 24 hours ago there appeared on television an advertisement warning young people and children of the seductive advances that can be made by strangers. That was in an entirely different context, but in terms of this motion the youth of this country should listen hard to the non-explanation and the bland and unpositive attitude of Government Ministers about the plight of the unemployed, particularly the youth of this country. It is to the credit of the Opposition that we have raised this key issue, not as a bantering match between sixth formers but as the reality of life for millions of people in this country, in particular for our youth. In some instances it is a life and death struggle for the youth of this country. For Ministers blandly to push aside the reality that faces the youth of this country is a crime.

I should declare an interest on two counts. I am both a father and a grandfather. My daughter has two young children. Her husband is unemployed. Both of them are in their early twenties. When I look at those kids who have no hope for the future, I despair. I have a 22-year-old son who had to leave Liverpool three years ago because of this Government's policies and the system that they represent. He has had to leave the home circle and his friends to look for work elsewhere. He has had to follow Tebbit's advice to get on his bike. I also have a 17-year-old daughter who is on a youth training scheme. She prays that she will be kept on at the end of it if she is given decent training. I have a 14-year-old lad who is still at school, with nothing in front of him but the youth training scheme and exploitation by this Government, as long as they remain in power.

It would be easy to raise the spectre of the wicked witch or the mad monk, but these matters should not be personalised. By providing simplistic answers, we do not educate youth about why these things are happening, who is responsible for them and how to resolve the problems that they face.

The hypocrisy of members of the Government is evident in their everyday speeches. As we listen to the Prime Minister talking about the creation of one nation, we must wonder where the evidence for such a creation exists. Is it in the contradictions which appeared only last week in the press? In the *Liverpool Daily Post* and *Liverpool Echo* stories appeared saying:

"Sexual harassment, verbal abuse, unpaid overtime, dirty conditions and wages as low as 48p an hour have been uncovered by a team looking into the plight of working teenagers.

They are considered to be the lucky ones because they have a job.

A 16-year-old girl machinist complained female staff were left in no doubt how they could find an extra £10 in their pay packet by an employer who regularly tried to touch her breast.

A 19-year-old clerk typist received just £25 for a 49-hour week, an 18-year-old with 11 O-Levels earned just £32·25 a week, while a young roofer was paid £8 for 12½ hours overtime."

That is the way in which the young are suffering.

Our elders and betters are supposed to be telling us what is good for us. Last week on Derby day those elders and betters consumed 8,000 bottles of champagne, 5,000 lb of strawberries, 1,800 lb of beef, 1,500 lb of salmon and 2,500 gulls' eggs. They must think that we are gulls if they believe that we will accept the propaganda, lies and distortions that come from Conservatives about the conditions of working people. They are out of touch with reality.

The Government's policy on education — on comprehensive schools, further education, higher education and universities—is an exposition of their lunacy and bankruptcy in relation to investment for the future. Places are being cut, courses are being savaged and standards in our educational establishments are being reduced.

Investment in the future should be the name of the game. If the Government were serious about their policies for industry, they would be encouraging massive investment in science and technology. The reverse is the case. The needs of the next decade, if not of the next century, are in our hands today and we, legislating in Parliament, should be preparing for the future if Britain is to survive as an industrial nation. Unfortunately, the resources and means of the nation are being frittered away by the Government.

Mr. Alton: Does the hon. Gentleman think that it helps standards in schools for youngsters to be led out of their schools to take part in demonstrations? Does he believe that constantly advocating breaking the law gives people the right standards for living?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope that hon. Members will keep to the terms of the motion.

Mr. Fields: I knew that I was being foolish the moment I gave way to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton).

Government propaganda tells us that we are now going through a boom period. Tell the youth, the unemployed, the people living in substandard housing, those with no hospital services and those deprived of social services that we are going through a boom and they will reply that there is no boom.

But even if we were going through a boom, the Government, particularly in view of the class of people they represent, should be making massive investment for the future. The unfortunate truth is that increased investment is going ahead, but it is not occurring in this country. The wealth created by the workers of Britain is being invested abroad rather than in industry in our own nation.

We warn the Government that the consequences of their actions will be felt in the next 12 to 18 months when worldwide capitalism faces a further slump, and Britain will be unable to live with that situation. Hence we explain to the youth the need to create vast armies of unemployed, of people on slave rates of pay, of youth on YTS schemes doing full-timers out of jobs and part-time workers out of work, reducing the standard of living of those in work by the schemes that the Government are adopting.

In addition, on the backs of trade union legislation, the Government are attempting to whip the trade union movement into line for the inevitable catastrophe that is round the corner, a catastrophe which the commentators on capitalism understand but to which the Government seem impervious.

The myth that workers are pricing themselves out of jobs—that myth is applied in particular to the young—has exploded. But for millions of working people, in particular the young — we have the highest levels of youth unemployment and the lowest wages—that myth is a crime for which the Government are responsible.

We tell youth, "You will not resolve your problems in isolation, any more than the difficulties of the old, the unemployed in general, the problems of peace in the world, low pay, inadequate health services and social services can be resolved in isolation."

While we are fighting to get these reforms and better conditions for youth, we must explain to the young the nature of society and the reasons why, because of the greed of the acquisitive few, those few propped up by the policies of the Government are feeding off the backs of working people. Despite the faint hearts in our movement, the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign has carried out in recent years sterling work on behalf of the youth of Britain.

The Minister boasted about the Government's record in health and safety at work. The Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign—with myself and comrade Dave Nellist as honorary vice-presidents — has achieved better health and safety conditions. In 1982 we fought against cuts in benefits for the unemployed. The demonstration and school strike this year brought about a climbdown by the Government over the compulsory nature of the YTS. We warn the Government that, if they bring in compulsory YTS, the 250,000 kids who were seen on the streets will pale into insignificance beside the mass movement of working-class youth that will appear.

A myth has been created about it being wrong to politicise young people. From the cradle to the grave, the working classes' minds are poisoned by the ruling classes and the Tories, by the present Government. It is happening in our schools. I will give just one example. Discussions were taking place in a school that I know in Liverpool about the Tolpuddle martyrs. Although that school is in a working-class area, the story that was peddled was to the effect that the Tolpuddle martyrs were criminals who, in the dead of night, carried out satanic worship, with skulls and the rest, for which they were transported to Australia. That is the level of political education in our schools.

We make no apology for joining with youth in politicising them. In my view, working-class youth should be politicised from the cradle, when they first start to speak and go on to read and talk about the nature of society. We must explain why there is no future for them under the present Tory Government and this capitalist system.

The deceit, lies and hypocrisy of society, with the YTS scheme being used, with wages councils being abolished, with low pay being the order of the day and with high levels of unemployment, which will become even higher in the period to come, is one side of the coin. On the other side are those who are telling us how wrong we are. They preach in the press that we are wrong, but they own and control the wealth of society. They are handing themselves vast pay increases, money got off the backs of working people.

The choice for us and for youth in 1985 involves recognising that society is at a crossroads. Increasingly, we must reach a decision. We must decide whether society is to continue on the greed of the few or the needs of the majority, using the wealth created by working people for the benefit of the workers.

We on the Opposition Benches, particularly Labour Members, are not here on the sufferance of the ruling class. We were forged as part of the trade union struggle, understanding that we should have to change capitalist law to working-class law. That is why the Labour party and trade unions were established. They were set up not to come to terms with the present system but to change it.

The young of today have not lived through the years of class collaboration and reformism over policies. They know, as all hon. Members should know, that there will be no return to the 1950s and 1960s. The system is bankrupt and crooked, and in terminal decay. The youth must understand that the future is theirs. As the most audacious and enthusiastic section of society, they are being denigrated by society in general and by the Government in particular. They are being demoralised.

I recently quoted the case of kids being used as scarecrows to chase away starlings from a rich farmer's cherry orchard. As I came through Euston station today I saw a young man on his knees cleaning people's shoes. "Shoeshine", he shouted, and when I spoke to him he told me that he had eight O and three A-levels. This is happening in London, not Liverpool, where we have been birched by the Government. Youth in London have no future.

Mr. Lawler *rose——*

Mr. Fields: The hon. Gentleman should sit down. He has nothing to say to me.

I, for one, have confidence in youth in particular and workers in general. [HON. MEMBERS: "They have none in you."] They have confidence in me as vice-president of the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign. We want to point out that the Thatcher Government understand what must be done to maintain the profit system and give profits to their rich backers. That is why they are selling off all our nationalised industries and our assets to the sharks on the stock exchange.

A future Socialist Government need to carry out the pledges enshrined in clause four of Labour's constitution, giving to those who work by hand and by brain the full fruits of their labour, taking over production, distribution and exchange in society.

The youth of today are the adults of tomorrow. Past generations have let down today's youth, but youth now have an opportunity. They are saying, "We shall no longer take the crumbs from the rich man's table. We do not even want the cake now. We want to take over the bakery." The youth of today have seen through the Government and the system that they represent.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn) *rose——*

Mr. Fields: I shall not give way. I am sorry. The hon. Gentleman should sit down.

We have a warning for the parasites who feed off the working people, who hive off the wealth for their own aggrandisement. When working people wake up and see through their own experience the distortions, lies and manipulation of society and hear the message of our Socialist alternative, an unstoppable movement will develop. The youth will be at the head of that movement, carrying out the historical task of transforming society from this rotten, decayed, exploitative system into a caring compassionate society where people will be treated as human beings, not wage slaves or market commodities for the benefit of a handful in society. Only then will youth look forward to a future free from fear and despair.

There is a correlation between unemployment and drugs, although we would not say that unemployment was

[Mr. Fields]

the sole cause of drug use. There is also a correlation between unemployment and crime. No one condones crime, hooliganism or drug taking, but if people are treated subhumanly we cannot expect any better from some of them.

The Government have brutalised social relations. They have brought about the politics of the jungle. The rich and powerful get the lion's share, and the poor and weak get the scraps. It is little wonder that the pale shadows of the Tory Government and the alliance ask why we seek to defend ourselves, our youth, our families and our conditions. We are fighting for those people against this brutal system which you are propping up along with the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to have to interrupt the hon. Member, when he is in such fine flow, but I do not prop up anything.

Mr. Fields: I shall not go into that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The message from this debate is that the Tory Government have nothing to offer youth. This system has nothing to offer youth. Despite the criticisms of the faint-hearted, my appeal to youth is to get organised in the Young Socialists and the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign and fight back against this vicious Tory Government and their attacks. We say to youth "The future can be yours, organised with a programme that can and will change society to create civilised conditions in health, education, housing, jobs and personal fulfilment." If youth hear no more during this debate than this message of hope, I for one shall be satisfied.

8.34 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I have an awful feeling that when the colleagues of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen, (Mr. Fields) take over power they will treat the young and the old with the same delicate courtesy as the hon. Gentleman showed to those who sought to intervene during his speech.

Nearly a fortnight ago, on the day on which Liverpool football club played Juventus in Brussels, I was in Holland talking to employers, trade union leaders and Government officials about the youth unemployment problem. The latest figures for youth unemployment in Holland had come out a couple of days before, and they were excited about the trend. The April unemployment rate among those under 19 had fallen by 20 per cent. between 1984 and 1985. This had followed a decrease of 14 per cent. in the March unemployment rate for the same group between 1984 and March 1985. People were optimistic that the tide had turned.

In the recent past, the Dutch were in a bad position. In 1980 an employers' federation estimated that one manufacturing job in two was operating at a loss. When the recession came, the loss of jobs was more rapid and went further than in the United Kingdom. The Dutch unemployment rate increased to 18·5 per cent. in January 1984. Nearly half the unemployed were young people.

At the end of 1982, a Conservative coalition was elected to Government. It followed policies that are broadly in line with those of the British Government. The Dutch Government gave priority to competitiveness and profitability and waged a successful battle against inflation. They kept tight control over the money supply and sought to cut public spending. They sought also to remove themselves directly from the wage negotiation process.

The one aspect of wage negotiation from which the Dutch Government have not removed themselves is in setting wages for young people. For many years, under successive Governments, an elaborate system of minimum wage levels has operated. With the co-operation of the trade unions and employers, the Dutch Government have sought deliberately to lower the minimum wages of workers under 19. Although the minimum wage for those over 20 increased between 1980 and 1985 by 6 per cent., the minimum wage of young workers was reduced, on average, by 22 per cent.

The Dutch Government's tactics in tackling youth unemployment were set at the beginning of 1983 by the chairman of the Federation of Netherlands Industry, an employers' organisation. The proposals that he put forward bore a remarkable similarity to the programme suggested at the end of 1982 by the unemployment steering group of the CBI, under the chairmanship of Sir Richard Cave, then the chairman of Thorn EMI. The one difference was that, because the situtation was rather worse in Holland than it was here, Mr. van Veen had an easier ride with his proposals and found it easier to get co-operation than have Sir Richard Cave and the unemployment steering group of the CBI in Britain.

Basically, the proposal was that the minimum wages of young workers in Holland should be reduced—as they have been there—by about 22 per cent. At the same time, a great deal of attention was paid to youth training schemes. They are not as comprehensive or as costly as those in operation here, but they are still an improvement on what has gone before. The one scheme which was adopted in Holland which we have not adopted in Britain is a shorter working week for young workers. In Holland it is impossible for any new young worker under the age of 23 to get employment in the public sector, or in a major firm covered by a collective trade union agreement, for more than 32 hours, with, of course, 32 hours' pay.

There have been some problems in introducing the scheme. The unions in the public sector showed a certain amount of reluctance, but they eventually accepted it, and I note that the 32-hour week scheme has been introduced in the public sector in a way that would certainly appeal to a Prime Minister wishing to see a reduction in public sector employment. One Civil Service department is reducing the number of posts open to recruitment from 4,500 to 4,000, yet it is taking on 5,000 new workers to fill those 4,000 jobs. Therefore, there is a reduction in the level of employment within the public sector, while at the same time more job opportunities are being given to young people.

The result has been spectacularly good in the past few months. There has been a reduction of 14 per cent. in youth unemployment in March compared with the previous year, and a reduction of 19 per cent. in April compared with a year ago. There is a real feeling that the problem of youth unemployment has been tackled successfully. If the Dutch experience continues to be as satisfactory as it has been in the recent past, I would ask the Government to look seriously at the possibility of introducing a shorter working week for young workers.

Our Government have introduced their own job-splitting programme, although not adopting it themselves.

We saw further encouragement of job-splitting for young people in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's last Budget. Perhaps this a concept that is too revolutionary at the moment. At the last count, only 1,500 posts had been split. It may well be that the Dutch approach, which is less revolutionary and much simpler to operate, offers a better and a simpler road to follow.

I hope that my hon. Friends will look very carefully at what is taking place across the Channel. As one Dutch employer said to me, "The 32-hour week for 32 hours' pay has two great attributes: first, it is very simple; secondly, it costs almost nothing." Both attributes should appeal to our Government, and I hope that they will consider them very carefully.

8.46 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) has put forward a very sensible proposition, and I hope the Government will take due note of it. I support the idea of a shorter working week for younger workers. Anything that can be done to ensure that more of the employment opportunities are shared more evenly is well worth our support. It is useful to look at examples from other European countries and see how we might emulate them.

We heard earlier about the statutory apprenticeship scheme in West Germany. At present, 500,000 young people are employed in statutory apprenticeships in West Germany, and we could well copy that. A similar scheme operates in Belgium.

In the three countries which have been mentioned—Holland, West Germany and Belgium—there is one thing that they all have in common, and that is Liberals participating in the Government. One of the problems in the United Kingdom is that the people who might be advocating measures of that sort—some of them in groups such as the Conservative Centre Forward—are not listened to with sufficient seriousness.

This year, 1985, should be a time of hope. Young people should be able to look forward with confidence to making their contribution to our community, but instead it is very much a time of hopelessness and despair.

About half of the unemployed in Britain are young people. I agree with the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields)—I hope it will not do him too much damage in the Militant Tendency—that there is an undoubted relationship between high unemployment and high rates of crime, despite the Prime Minister's regular denials of the link. Half of all the crimes are committed by young people. There is a link, too, with the escalating problem of drug abuse—a subject to which I shall like to return later in my speech.

Many of our young people face the prospect of 50 years on the dole. They face youth training schemes. They face increasing competition for university places. Many of my contemporaries, with worse A-level results than brothers and sisters who are now being turned away from universities, were able to get into higher education. It is a tragedy that those younger brothers and sisters are now denied the opportunity of going to university. What we see today is a reduction in self-esteem and self-respect.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), who opened the debate for the Opposition, indulged himself in some poetry. I am glad to see him returning to his place. I think that Alfred, Lord Tennyson put it very well in a couplet that he composed when he asked:

> "Ah, what shall I be at fifty,
> Should Nature keep me alive,
> If I find the world so bitter
> When I am but twenty-five?"

The truth is that there is today a great sense of bitterness, hopelessness and despair among many of our young people.

The hon. Gentleman complained that only £250,000 had been made available for International Year of Youth. I do not intend to follow that argument because the debate is not simply about throwing money at young people and their problems. However, I agree that it should be about the Government taking International Year of Youth seriously.

The hon. Member for Broadgreen, who spoke as a member of the Labour party, struck an interesting contrast with the Labour Front Bench. We should not laugh him off, as some hon. Members tried to do today. In Liverpool, his colleagues run the council. Indeed, his colleagues have a great say in who is to be selected for many seats throughout the country. We shall see more and more people like him in the House representing the Labour party.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Good.

Mr. Alton: We know that there are great affinities between the London and Liverpool Labour parties. We should not laugh off the hon. Gentleman, but should take him seriously. When he talks, as he did today, about breaking the capitalist laws and replacing them with working-class laws, it shows how he and many of his hon. Friends regard the law of the land. When I intervened, I pointed out to him that it sets an appalling standard and example to young people to lure them from their school classes, to march them to the pierhead in Liverpool and for speakers to harangue them at open-air rallies. The effect of that on discipline and morale in schools, and on their long-term opportunities and future, is unbelievable.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House why he believes that explaining to young people the cause of their lost opportunities and how the system brutalises them is a disadvantage to them?

Mr. Alton: It is not a disadvantage to explain to people the causes of our problems. The way to solve those problems is through the ballot box and parliamentary democracy, not by pulling young people on to the streets, or by encouraging them to leave their classrooms. That is simply to take the first steps towards breaking the law.

As I also pointed out in my intervention, constantly to tell people that it is all right to break some laws but not others, and that they can defy the Government, whoever that Government may be, breeds contempt for parliamentary democracy. Some of us know that this is all that the members of Militant Tendency who dominate the Labour party in many parts are concerned with. I warn the House not to laugh off those pied pipers who pull young people from their classrooms and who constantly advocate breaking the law.

I also have a criticism of the Government. They have created the breeding ground that has allowed people like the hon. Member for Broadgreen to prosper and thrive. We have witnessed the creation of a disaffected, disillusioned, cynical and bitter youth. The measures which the Government have announced during the past two weeks have compounded the problem. They have announced a

[Mr. Alton]

rise in students' grants below the rate of inflation, which will cut the real value of the grant further. They have continued to threaten to extract young people from the vital protection of the wages councils. They have presented a review of social security which treats anyone under the age of 25 as a juvenile and forces young people into greater dependence on their parents. It has been a bad 14 days for young people.

It has also been the 14 days during which the Government have implemented their change in the Department of Health and Social Security board and lodging house allowance regulations to save £70 million. The affect of that saving has been to force about 10,000 people in Scotland on to the streets, and about 4,000 people in Merseyside to endure greater hardship. Many young people will now sleep rough in the inner cities rather than go home. Others will make fraudulent claims. Others again will take to prostitution or to peddling drugs to pay for living accommodation. How can the Government reconcile that policy with their previous urging of young people to get on their bikes, to become a nation of Dick Whittingtons, and to go off and seek their fortunes? The Government urged them from their homes, but now do not give them the wherewithal to survive in the social antipodes—the inner city areas—where young people find themselves.

This year is International Year of Youth, and my hon. Friends and I have tried to take it seriously. That is why we invited 1,000 young people to participate in our Youth Day in Westminster earlier this month. The young people who came wanted to learn about Parliament, its processes, and how this building operates and functions. I believe that they learnt a great deal that day. Many of them may have seen my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) introduce his Bill on disabled young people.

Four other Bills have also been introduced by my hon. Friends during International Year of Youth. My hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), who is present, introduced a Bill to deal with the problem of young people in rural areas; my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) introduced a Bill to deal with the problems of young people in Scotland; my hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) introduced a Bill to deal with employment opportunities for young people, in which he advocated the statutory apprenticeship scheme, to which I referred earlier; and on the first sitting day of Parliament in International Year of Youth my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) introduced his Youth Charter Bill. We have taken International Year of Youth extremely seriously.

"International" is a word that I wish to draw to the Government's attention. It is very sad that the Young Conservatives and the Federation of Conservative Students have decided not to participate in the British Youth Council's visit to Moscow this year. The best way of building bridges and creating peace in the world is for our young people, whether they live on the eastern or the western side of Europe, to get to know each other. Unacceptable pressure has been placed on the British Youth Council. It has been threatened with losing its grant if it goes ahead with the visit. That is utterly unacceptable. I hope that the Government will say tonight that there will be no reduction in its funds. I hope that they will reconsider supporting what could be a mission of peace.

As the joint chairman of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth, I also regard it as a tragedy that during the past five years young people from the poorest parts of the world have been denied the opportunity of coming to our colleges and universities because of the introduction of full-cost fees for overseas students.

I shall make my remaining remarks in the context of the three grand themes which the United Nations designated for International Year of Youth—peace, participation and development. I ask the House to consider now not international peace, but inner peace. What sort of generation is being brought up on heroin and cocaine? Some 100,000 young people in Britain today are taking heroin. Only two weeks ago the chairman of our Home Affairs Select Committee rightly said:

> "Every son and daughter of every family in this country will be at risk from this terrible epidemic."

For years, Liberals have been advocating the introduction of life sentences for those who peddle heroin and organise the evil of trade in heroin. It is one of the worst maladies to affect our age. My right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party has also said that we should sequestrate the funds of those who have been making their vast profits from peddling heroin to the young. At present the racketeers salt away their ill-gotten gains, place fortunes in bank accounts in Zurich, or bask on beaches in countries with which we have no extradition arrangements. They should not be able to get away with it. We must make every effort to bring them to justice, to sequestrate their ill-gotten gains and to use them for the treatment of young people who suffer from the heroin plague. It was very easy during the strike of the National Union of Mineworkers to sequestrate the union's funds. Surely it must also be possible to track down those to whom I have referred and similarly to sequestrate their funds.

Inner peace, the opportunity to feel that one can be a self-respecting member of the community and the right to self-esteem are important conditions for many of our young people. Similarly, the right to play a part in society is vital. That is why we on the alliance Benches have considered the lowering of the age of candidature in line with the voting age. My noble Friend Lord Tordoff introduced an amendment to the Representation of the People Bill, which, sadly, was defeated by Conservative peers voting against the proposal and by the abstention of Labour peers. The alliance believes that there should be statutory representation by young people on organisations such as the area manpower boards of the Manpower Services Commission, which monitor youth training schemes at local level, thereby allowing trainees some say in the schemes in which they participate.

The alliance thinks that young people should be able to sit on local authority committees. I served on the education committee in Liverpool some years ago. The Liberal group introduced the right for a young person from one of the local schools to be elected—incidentally, by the single transferable vote system—after hustings had been held to sit on the education committee and to be able to speak on behalf of the consumers. There are other organisations, such as the health boards, where young people should have the chance to express themselves.

Participation is crucial to Liberals. We believe in giving people control over the institutions that govern their lives. For many young people the mechanisms of control do not exist as yet. Participation should not be confined to a purely mechanistic level. Unemployment means having nothing to do, and sometimes that can mean having nothing to do with the rest of us. Young people also need to be able to participate by virtue of having a job.

I have reminded the House of the number of apprenticeships that have been lost. There were 155,000 in 1979, and the total declined to about 90,000 in the mid-1980s. Far too many of our young people have been introduced to the hopelessness and despair of the dole queue.

Liberals believe that the youth training scheme is based on sound principles, but we are not happy with many of the ways in which it operates. Far too many employers view the scheme as a means of obtaining cheap labour. Too few young people enter permanent employment at the end of their YTS scheme. Many young people receive no real training from YTS and, therefore, are not having their employment prospects improved. Too many people on the YTS are being put into jobs in which they are neither interested nor suited to.

Liberals would like to see the YTS improved, first, by the establishment of an inspectorate to vet companies which wish to take part in the scheme and regularly to scrutinise the scheme at the workplace. Secondly, all health, safety and insurance regulations applying to industry should apply also to the YTS. Thirdly, no young person should be forced on to the scheme under the threat of reduction or removal of state benefits. Fourthly, we should establish an improved system of consultation so that everyone entering the YTS is appointed to a training scheme in which he is interested and to which he is suited. Fifthly, those on the scheme should receive fair payment that is set at a level appreciably higher than that of state benefit. Sixthly, each young person should receive training in a number of skills, and the system of assessment and qualification should be developed in consultation with both trade unions and employers. Seventhly, each young person on the YTS should receive training in life skills. Finally, there should be greater emphasis on training in skills that are of use to the community.

Earlier, the Minister asked what practical proposals the Opposition had for improving the YTS, and he was given some ideas by the hon. Member for Huddersfield. I hope that the ideas which I have introduced to the debate will be considered seriously by the Minister.

After peace and participation, the other great theme of this year is supposed to be development. There should be more opportunities in our Britain of 1985 for more personal development. At present, the clock is being turned back in education to a time before the Education Act 1944 and even before Mr. Gladstone's Elementary Education Act of 1870. Opportunities for development are being reduced.

Young people in the International Year of Youth have suffered a great deal if they have wanted improved education opportunities. There has been a series of attacks on their standard of living—they are already poor—and on their representative institutions. In the past fortnight they have been told that there is to be yet another cut in the value of their maintenance grant. After a 10 per cent. drop in the real value of the grant over the past five years, they are to receive only a 3 per cent. increase this year. That increase will not even allow the grant to keep pace with inflation. They will probably have to rely even more on housing benefit payments and long vacation supplementary benefit payments, which have come to provide vital income for students on inadequate grants.

The Government have thought of that. The Secretary of State for Social Services has promised that in his already infamous Green Paper there will be proposals that students should soon be deprived of long vacation supplementary benefit and housing benefit payments. Why is he taking that course? It appears that the payments made to students cause the DHSS administrative problems. However, the Secretary of State claims that it will not really matter if these payments are not made as the amount of benefit involved is usually small. The payments are not small if the student's grant barely covers his college bills, if he has a permanent bank overdraft and if his parents do not pay the full contribution. They are certainly not small if, as thousands of students have found, the new travel grant system has left them hundreds of pounds out of pocket.

How do the Government expect young people in colleges to manage? The answer is in the social security Green Paper, which says that students should be

"helped through the grant system by their families and by their earnings in vacation".

As nearly half the parental contribution to grants are not paid in full now, and as the Secretary of State chickened out of asking parents to contribute to tuition fees last November, in reality this means one thing. If a student finds that his money has run out, he will have to rely on part-time or temporary work to stay in education—never mind the damage to studies. These are Victorian values of the worst kind, and the Government are undermining the funding of public education.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that forcing students into part-time work takes jobs from other people in the community?

Mr. Alton: I made that point at the outset of my remarks. We should be sharing the available work and making more, not fewer, working opportunities available. Encouraging students to take up jobs adds to the unemployment problem. I agree with the hon. Gentleman.

There is worse. The only institutions on which students can rely to defend their interests, the student unions, are also under attack. The Green Paper on higher education accuses them of being unrepresentative and says that some of their policies are

"determined by a minute portion of the union membership."

That is rich, coming from a Conservative Government with a mandate of only 31 per cent. of the electorate.

Every student union in the country uses proportional representation in some variation to elect its officers, and all of them are therefore more representative of their electorate than is the Secretary of State. The strict controls on student union expenditure threatened in section 7.19 of the Green Paper are yet another attempt by the Government to clamp down on those of their victims who have the audacity to fight back.

What do the Government have in store for students? The likelihood is that it will be some form of student loans system, which would be a disaster. Not only would it be extremely costly to introduce, taking years to become cost-effective, but it would discourage entry into higher education by women and those from less affluent

[Mr. Alton]

backgrounds. This is at a time when a fall in the 18-year-old population offers us a golden opportunity to broaden access to education across the social spectrum.

The International Year of Youth will, for young people in Britain and in British colleges, represent the opposite of the United Nations' themes. The Government are encouraging protest, not peace. They are discouraging participation and turning away from the development of a fair and accessible higher education system. The Secretary of State for Education and Science is a fellow of the Oxford College of All Souls and the Faithful Departed. He clearly wants to add traditional British education to the faithful departed.

9.3 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I declare an interest. I have worked for a large proportion of my career with young people, and I made my maiden speech on this topic. The Opposition, with their unerring sense of overstatement, talk about the "desperate plight" of young people. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) went over the top with his Marxist analysis of the situation. For those reasons, as well as many others, I shall oppose the motion and support the Government amendment.

Although the world of the 1980s is not easy for young people, it is important to emphasise that they are in good heart. Every day in my constituency I learn about the achievements of the young people of Norwich and the surrounding areas. I learn of young people who have gone on Operation Raleigh round the world and achieved great things; I learn of young people on the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme who are achieving great things; I learn of young people starting their own businesses; and I learn of those who are aiming high in academic, sporting or other sectors. We should commend the achievements of our young people and not continually talk them down in the gloomy tones of the Opposition.

Above all else, our young people need a sense of direction — not the direction provided by the hon. Member for Broadgreen — and leadership. Any fair-minded person must pay tribute to the Government at least for their efforts to provide higher standards of education, which must be the right way forward for our young people. We should also congratulate the Government on improving and extending the youth training scheme. They plan to extend it to two years so that no young person need be without a job, training or education. If that is not an ambitious programme, I do not know what is.

The hon. Member for Broadgreen spoke proudly of how the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign organised a strike of school students against the youth training scheme. The hon. Gentleman does not appear to be thoroughly ashamed of himself, but he should be. That is the type of irresponsibility among adults which leads young people to ignorant rather than tolerant and enlightened attitudes.

I deplore recent events at the University of East Anglia. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Broadgreen has anything to do with the Socialist Workers party, but its members did all that they could to prevent free speech at that university. Thanks to influence and firm action by the university authorities, the meeting went ahead. That was a triumph for democracy and a defeat of everything that the hon. Member for Broadgreen appears to stand for.

Opposition Members should remember that ever since the early 1960s, when Labour was in power, there has been pressure to increase the wages of young people. There may be votes in this, but the result of increasing such wages was a reduction in the length and effectiveness of apprenticeship schemes. We all regret that trend, but responsibility must be laid squarely with the Labour Governments of the 1960s. In 1970, 12 per cent. of 18-year-olds had adult rates of pay. That proportion has increased to more than 50 per cent. today. Anybody who compares what is happening in Britain with what is happening in West Germany will not be surprised at the serious depletion in the British training effort and the reduction in skills which are vital to our economy.

I do not need to spend long reminding the House of our serious skills shortages. Information technology is just one shortage area. In response to such shortages, the Government introduced and extended YTS. It was the Labour party which failed to take up the challenge when it had an opportunity to do so.

Mr. Sheerman: Will the hon. Gentleman cast his mind back to 1979 when total unemployment was equivalent to youth unemployment today? The proportion of the problem is quite different now. Does he agree that the youth opportunities programme was successful and tailored according to conditions at that time? We did not have 1·25 million unemployed young people then.

Mr. Thompson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding me of 1979. I remember it well. I remember campaigning when the number of unemployed people had doubled under Labour. I can remember the criticisms of the youth opportunities programme. It was right for the Conservative party to make good those deficiencies and to introduce a proper scheme in the shape of YTS.

I should like to draw the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench to some serious points about the youth training scheme. There are dangers in that scheme — for example, too much bureaucracy. I hope that we shall address ourselves to those dangers. I hope that there will be more co-operation and liaison between the Manpower Services Commission, education and industry. The lines of communication between those three areas of national life are not as good as they should be. I hope that Ministers are taking note of this point. As a matter of urgency, we should do all that we can to raise the standards of achievement on the YTS. I hope that we shall not be tempted, as sometimes happens, to mislead our young people into the belief that they are gaining qualifications when they are not.

For example, if young people are on a scheme that provides them with skills, that is fine and it must be better than having no training at all; but we must not try to give them the impression that they are obtaining craft skills that are provided by more extended training schemes elsewhere. I am not criticising the YTS in saying that; I am merely stating a very important way in which it can be improved. We must raise standards, make sure that young people fully understand what skills they are acquiring and what they will be able to do with them when the time comes.

The good news is that in Norfolk the number of people going on to jobs from YTS is as high as 80 per cent. I am

quoting the most up-to-date figures available. Surely that is a success if ever there was one. So much for Opposition carping on that point.

Education is mentioned in the motion and the amendment. Again, I should like to pay tribute to the Government's efforts to raise standards in education. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will not argue with this. There is no doubt that at the moment there is difficulty and low morale in the education service. We should look seriously at the causes. That does not mean that we should change course. I should like to set the record straight. The House should be reminded that we are accused of making cuts in education, but the facts are that more than ever is being spent on education per pupil, the teacher-pupil ratio is the best ever, and more young people aged between 18 and 20 are entering higher education than ever before.

Nevertheless, we should look seriously at the causes of the present unhappiness in the education service. I know that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench are doing so and taking that point seriously. I believe that, in the long term, for the sake of education and our young people, the financing of teachers' salaries should be removed from the local authorities. I hope that if that were ever to come about, we would end once and for all the sad saga of the Burnham committee and the consequences resulting from the failure over and over again to reach satisfactory agreements. As a Member of Parliament, and as a past member of the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association, it is good news to find that at least some of the teachers' organisations have realised that there is no future in conducting their dispute by strike action. I hope that that message will finally get across, and that we can get back to talking about the problems of education, the teaching profession, and so on.

The financing of teachers' salaries should be taken out of the control of local authorities because, ideally, schools should be run by head teachers and boards of governors. State schools should be run by those who are closest to the school, not by large bureaucracies. There must be local input. That matter needs debate and discussion. I hope that there will be much more debate and discussion before we finish discussing local government finance and related topics.

There should be a national approach to the teaching profession. That is why I support the idea of a professional teachers' council. I hope that that matter will be discussed again. If we can move in those general directions and continue pressing for higher standards in education, as the Government are doing, we shall serve our young people well.

In case the Opposition should feel unduly pleased with themselves over their criticisms of the present education set-up, they should remember the serious damage that I saw done in Manchester and elsewhere by the headlong rush into comprehensivisation. I was teaching in Manchester at the time. Nationally, we have not recovered from the damage. We need to move on and to improve our schools in every way that we possibly can. Let us not forget the prominent part played in that dreadful, mishandled political rush to the new comprehensive organisation by one of the members of the gang of four, now a member of the alliance.

The youth service in Norwich is doing a good job. I have obtained a great deal of experience of the work being done by its professional and voluntary workers. Last Monday, I visited a youth and community centre in Thorpe St. Andrew. There is a great deal to discuss on this subject, but I shall confine my remarks to saying that I hope that the Government will continue to do what they can to encourage the professional and voluntary leaders and the young people who do good work and who take part in the worthwhile activities provided by our youth service.

In the House and the country, we need to apply ourselves even more vigorously to ways of harnessing the ambitions and energies of our young people. I should favour some form of national service, if it were possible. Nevertheless, whatever happens, we must set higher standards. The Opposition wish to level down. We must set the highest challenge and standards for our young people, and they will respond to that challenge. As we have heard tonight, they are responding to the challenge.

We have seen the effects of lower standards of discipline and moral education in schools, families and society. The subject of drugs has been mentioned tonight. Those are serious matters. Lower disciplinary standards and the failure of moral education will lead to ever more appalling effects unless we seek to reverse the trends. I am sure that there is consensus throughout the country that that is the direction in which we need to move.

The Government are addressing themselves seriously to the problems of youth and will continue to do so if we push them in the right direction. Our young people will have, and will be able to provide, the energy and leadership for their children in the future. Therefore, I am happy to support the Government's amendment and to oppose the Opposition's overstated motion.

9.22 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): The Government's White Paper "Education and training for young people" contains at least one interesting sentence. On page 4, it states:

"Yet, for all these developments, much still remains to be done."

The word "much" can cover a multitude of sins, as can the word "very" and many others. When the Minister replies I should be interested to know whether he considers that the problem of what needs to be done in our education system for youth is massive, enormous or a crisis that desperately needs attention and not just a sentence in a White Paper which merely states:

"much still remains to be done."

As a teacher of many years' standing, I want to concentrate upon some of the features of our education system which have been covered in various documents such as "Better Schools" and that excellent report from the Select Committee on Science and Technology in the other place on education and training for new technologies.

The environment in our schools creates a problem for young people, in that they are worried by the impression created and the urges given to them by teachers and parents. There is a feeling that they must work harder so that in future they can somehow achieve the paradise of high-wage employment, as a result of which they will throughout their working lives enjoy a high salary combined with job security, marvellous holidays, trips abroad and so on.

In reality, school buildings are deteriorating, buckets are provided to catch the leaking water from the roofs and library facilities are denied. A recent report showed that very few chartered librarians work in our state schools, as

[Mr. Gareth Wardell]

a result of which very few children learn how a good library works within the school system. Many pupils do not know how to use the reference and cross-reference facilities that a good library provides. In addition, book stocks are now suffering from prolonged use over many years.

When my little boy comes home from school he asks, "What is the point of working hard? When I see Mr. Davies in my classroom, I think to myself, 'If that is the sort of job I will have when I finish my school career I would rather not bother'." That is the type of discrimination that has been built into our education system.

Morale among teachers is low, and the Government are not helping. Paragraph 4.27 of the report of the Select Committee of the other place stated:

"In schools there is a shortage of teachers in specialist subjects, notably mathematics and physics".

It said that the Cockcroft committee, looking at mathematics in secondary schools,

"estimated . . . that the 'hidden' shortage of mathematics teachers in secondary schools was about 9,000."

Yet this country prides itself on an education system that is supposed to be the best in the world.

According to the Select Committee of the other place, teachers seldom have experience of applied science in industry and commerce. There is an inbuilt tendency among teachers to be inward-looking. They do not have the necessary work experience to pass on to their pupils. A fundamental change in the secondary school curriculum is necessary. The Open University system, under which material is made available through radio and television programmes and units provided to students, is a model that could be repeated in our schools. That would avoid the sad situation which still exists, whereby teachers trot out dictated notes day after day. The notes which teachers used in their colleges are passed on to their students with no additional input. There must be a fundamental change so that the Open University system is repeated in our schools.

I welcome the training and vocational education initiative, but I believe that companies should increase their efforts to interest local and head teachers in their enterprises. In liaison with schools, companies are doing very little to ensure that our young people are prepared for the changes that are now taking place in our economy.

The former chairman of the Manpower Services Commission, now Lord Young, stated in evidence to the Select Committee that in 1983 the youth training scheme cost the Government about £850 million. German employers, not the Government, pay about £7·5 billion per year towards apprenticeships. The Government have said that much needs to be done and have outlined some proposals in their White Paper. I hope that they will rectify the fact that, according to Lord Young, the expenditure on training and the proportion of the working population holding vocational qualifications was lower in the United Kingdom in 1983 than it was, for example, in West Germany.

Relevant knowledge is critical. It is a sad reflection on our education system that most young people in our schools not only have no link with local industry but do not know the difference between the roles of their local community council, the district council, the county council and their Member of Parliament. A serious look needs to be taken at a school system which churns out young people ignorant of the roles of the important decision-makers in our system. If we do not combat that ignorance, we shall be in serious trouble.

The decline in our standard of living is shown by the GDP per head for the United Kingdom compared with other industrial countries. We are slipping year after year. Before long, we may not be able to describe ourselves as an advanced industrial economy at all.

In a recent oral answer to me, the Prime Minister expressed complete confidence in Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools, but what experience do the inspectors have of life? Is there any guarantee that they have done other than been educated in our schools, passed on to our universities and colleges, then gone back to our schools and then been appointed as inspectors to advise others on the best way forward? In Wales, the inspectors churn out papers such as "Home-School Links", which is just chat about the way in which teachers should mark reports. There is no mention of solvent abuse, under-age drinking, crime, pornography and the rest. That is a pretty bad show on the part of the inspectorate. On the subject of obscenity, I hope that orders will shortly be brought in to bring the video recordings Act into operation. That will be of at least some assistance to our youth.

In West Glamorgan there has been a massive increase in the percentage of young people among the long-term unemployed. The DHSS research report No. 11 on the cohort study of unemployed men states that the relationship between long-term unemployment and illness in our society is a fruitful area of research for the future. I hope that the Secretary of State for Employment and other Secretaries of State will consider setting up a research study for that purpose.

I am deeply perturbed that the effects of long-term unemployment among young people will be seen after a time lag. The eminent professor of gynaecology and paediatrics at Edinburgh university, Professor Baird, has examined longitudinal studies of the effect of long-term unemployment on infant mortality rates 15 and 20 years ahead. I wonder what the effect on young people in terms of neonatal and perinatal mortality will be and what other consequences and hardships will appear after the time lag. The Government must set up a research project to find out what evidence exists and to ensure that the young girls who will be giving birth to children in 15 or 20 years' time will not have such problems.

The two-year YTS scheme worries me, as it does other Opposition Members, because the youngsters do not believe that they are part of a proper work force. Indeed, they do not know where they belong. They are neither one thing nor the other. Youngsters who want independence and who wish to live away from home will be forced by the Government's new board and lodging regulations to move from place to place to find homes. I wish that the public had given the same attention to that change as they did to the cut in education grants, which forced the Secretary of State for Education and Science to change his mind.

I am extremely angry about the present education system. The priority of all hon. Members should be to talk to youngsters and to listen to what they say. The message that I have received from them is that the Government do not care. Unless we start to embrace those youngsters and stop leaving them in ignorance, in terms of income per

head of the population and the quality of life; Britain will be doomed to slip down the international table of standards of living. In the end, we shall say that we are lucky to be ahead of some of the most under-developed countries in the world, but we should be saying that we wish to be one of the great countries in terms of our progress and development.

9.37 pm

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): A motion phrased in such generalised, negative terms, which lumps together those who have done well, including the 20-year-old football stars and people who have started their own businesses, with the unemployed, is an insult to those who have done well and glosses over the special needs of the disadvantaged. After hearing the speeches made by Opposition Members tonight, I am not surprised that youngsters are much more cynical about politicians and politics than is the rest of the population. They believe that they are being manipulated by politicians.

One thing that youngsters have in common is that they do not like general statements about their having no hope or no future. Nor do they wish life to be run for them. They want the opportunity to control their destinies. It is no coincidence that two main themes of the International Year of Youth are development and participation. Traditionally, youngsters have looked to education and employment for development. But what development? We have heard the praises sung of the old apprenticeship system, but hon. Members have ignored the fact that many youngsters could not enter the system. Indeed, many youngsters who obtained jobs had no training at all. The majority of youngsters—it is estimated to be 60 per cent.—who left school and went into employment received no training, whereas in competitor countries the reverse was the case. They went into dead-end jobs with low wages and minimum security, which is one reason why Britain has more youth unemployment than do its competitors.

We are now moving into a new world where youngsters have the opportunity to learn skills that will be of real use to them. There will be an end to those wasted school years when youngsters could not wait to leave school. Nowadays, the headmaster of a TVEI school will say that youngsters are queueing to get into school in the mornings and that they cannot get rid of them at the end of the day. We are creating a generation of people who can look forward to qualifications, real skills and security of employment, and the economy will benefit as a result. Those who doubt that young people want this ought to talk to them. We have heard about young people wanting this and wanting that.

When the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) talks to his pushchair revolutionaries, one wonders how many other people he talks to. If one talks to those who are taking part in the technical and vocational education initiative and to those who are in youth training schemes, one finds that the majority are happy about being in those schemes. They believe that they are receiving a worthwhile training. The youth training scheme is taking those who were written off at school. They played truant because they found that the school course was entirely irrelevant. Having been written off by their teachers, they went into the youth training scheme and discovered that they possessed talents that they did not know they possessed. After nine months on a YTS course they have written computer programmes. Before YTS they had no future. Now their future is bright. They find that they can contribute something to society.

To those who purport to have the interests of young people at heart I say that every time they deter, by politically motivated propaganda, young people from going into the youth training scheme they destroy their self-advancement. There must be many 17-year-olds who wish that they had never been misguided by professional critics. They look at those who did not listen to the professional critics but went instead into the youth training scheme and find that they have jobs, or at least that they have received some experience and training.

The youth training scheme is developing into the major avenue between school and employment. It is being incorporated into longer-term craft training, as is happening with the electrical contractors, but the vital point about the new scheme is that it must remove the distinction between employed and unemployed trainees. It must not remain the second best, the alternative to a proper job. It must be the accepted destination of those 16-year-olds who want to acquire a skill when they leave school. That distinction must be removed if the stigma of YTS being the second best is to be removed. It must not be regarded as the avenue for the unemployed.

There are still too many young people over the age of 18 who are still unemployed and who have been without work ever since they left school. They have to look for other avenues of self-development. That is dealt with by the youth service. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) referred to the youth service. I wish that the Opposition recognised the valuable role played by paid and, more often than not, unpaid people who dedicate themselves to the development of young people.

The positive approach of the youth service to the problems of large scale unemployment has led to new initiatives and new ideas. It has provided young people with the self-confidence that they would not otherwise have had. There is a new range of options, from drop-in centres to "instant muscle". It is appropriate that in 1985 this work has been supported and enhanced by means of the youth circular and the formation of the National Youth Advisory Council.

I wish that every local authority was as supportive as are the Government. In 1982-83, 78 out of 96 local education authorities spent less than their grant-related expenditure youth service assessment on the youth service. It means that £35 million—30 per cent. of the total—was lost to the youth service. The Government cannot be accused of failing to recognise the importance of the youth service. They provided a 13·1 per cent. increase in the youth budget for 1985-86.

Many local authorities also failed to recognise the valuable contribution of the voluntary organisations. For every £1 of public money that is put into the voluntary youth sector, a huge amount of money is generated in terms of cash and time. I hope that in this International Year of Youth local authorities will consider their responsibilities, pay heed to the circular and give young people that which is rightfully theirs.

As we debate this motion, hundreds, indeed thousands, of young people are meeting in youth clubs all around the country. They will be planning community work and raising money for charity. There will also be a minority who are smashing telephone boxes and indulging in other

[Mr. Geoff Lawler]

acts of vandalism. We shall read of the latter in the press tomorrow; we shall not read of the former. If it were not for the youth service, there would be much more of the latter than of the former.

Opposition Members make the big mistake of seeing everything as a problem. Young people are, to them, a problem, when in reality they are not. They do not want to be viewed as a problem. They are a major resource in terms of the future, and now, for the first time, there is a guarantee that every young person will have an opportunity to realise his or her full potential. That is the best contribution that the Government could make to International Year of Youth.

9.50 pm

Mr. Sheerman: We have had a full debate and, although I have only a few minutes in which to comment on it, I must deal with three points of fact following the Minister's remarks. He challenged me about the saving of £5 billion to £7 billion. I have with me a copy of the *Unmployment Bulletin* containing the figures, which I will let him have.

The hon. Gentleman was unhappy when I referred to half of those leaving YTS getting jobs. I refer him to an article entitled

"Half YTS leavers find jobs"

in *The Times Higher Educational Supplement*. He also challenged the veracity of Youthaid information. I hate to embarrass the hon. Gentleman, following the altercations that took place about discontent with bad youth training schemes, but a few months ago, replying to a parliamentary question of mine, the Minister accused Youthaid of inaccuracy. I challenged him on that, but received from him no example of inaccuracy in Youthaid reports.

Youthaid has catalogued many misleading statements that various Ministers, from the Prime Minister down, including Lord Young, have made about the number of people getting jobs following YTS training, the Youthaid figure being not 70 but 40 per cent. That information is on the record and I will let the Minister have that, too.

I got the feeling as the Minister spoke about the YTS that he was really discussing the philosophy of "Never mind the quality, feel the width." My hon. Friends and I have been indulging in positive and constructive criticism of the YTS. We want it to be a training scheme, not job experience, whatever the quality of that job experience. We want it to be the sort of training that will match the training received by youngsters given by any of our industrial competitors. That is palpably not what it is now.

Mr. Alton *rose*——

Mr. Sheerman: I do not have time to give way.

If we are to compete with our major competitors, we must perform in training and education, and I refer the House to an interesting written answer yesterday by the Secretary of State for Education and Science to my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), who asked about the age participation and training in European countries, in the United States and in Japan. *[Interruption.]* There is no need for carping criticism from Conservative Members. The table contained in the answer given by the Secretary of State ends with Spain, followed by the United Kingdom at the bottom of the league. We are at the bottom of the league as a result of the Government's education and training policies. We in the Labour party have ideas that the Government palpably do not have.

Prior to this debate we had a fascinating discussion about famine in Africa and under-privilege in various parts of the world. A range of schemes is needed and a Government with imagination could harness the idealism of our young people—the wonderful youngsters that we have in Britain—to fight under-privilege and poverty and to carry out the constructive tasks that need to be performed. The potential is there. The Government lack the will to do anything for our young people.

9.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I must start by telling the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) that I am not deaf, that I listened intently to what he shouted and that, if he wants to quote Disraeli, I wish that he would get it right. In "Sybil", published in 1845, Benjamin Disraeli said:

"The Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity."

Mr. Sheerman: That is what I said.

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Gentleman did not; he said "prosperity".

Mr. Sheerman: If the Under-Secretary of State reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he will see that I said "posterity". I said that the words could be updated today to include "prosperity".

Mr. Dunn: I accept the hon. Gentleman's apology.

We have had a stimulating debate, with contributions from my hon. Friends the Members for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart), for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) and for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) and comments by the hon. Members for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields), for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) and for Gower (Mr. Wardell). I enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Gower, who made some very sensible points to which I shall certainly give my attention.

I accept that schools can do much to increase young people's chances of finding employment or of creating jobs for themselves and others. The House must accept that our schools have a duty to prepare pupils effectively for working life. I am very much afraid that the standards now generally attained by our pupils are not as good as they need to be for the competitive world of today, still less of tomorrow. Schools must promote enterprise, adaptability and the qualities and skills needed for work in a technological age. They must seek to develop the attitudes that will help young people to find their way in modern society. To do this, changes are needed, in what schools do and how they teach. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has launched his initiative to improve standards. That is why we need national agreement, as the hon. Member for Gower said, about the objectives of the school curriculum. That is why the Government are spending £250 million on the technical and vocational education initiative.

During the early part of the debate, we were challenged to list Labour authorities that had refused to participate in TVEI. The non-participants are the Inner London education authority, Manchester, Sheffield and, of course, Liverpool. I hope, because bids for the final round of the TVEI allocation are not due until the end of July, that those

authorities will decide to join the initiative for the benefit of the children for whose education they are responsible. I welcome the fact that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) condemned those authorities that were not taking part because of their political animosity to the scheme.

I believe that the hon. Member for Broadgreen was trying to make a helpful speech—at least, helpful to his hon. Friends on the Labour Front Bench—but I must express concern that a Member of this House, when giving advice to impressionable young people, should advise them to break the law rather than to take advantage of the opportunities that may or may not be available to them.

It was indeed welcome that the hon. Member, in the honesty with which he expressed his views, left us in no doubt whatever where he and his colleagues will stand when they form a majority on the Opposition Benches. *[Interruption.]* They certainly will not form a majority on the Government side of the House. The hon. Gentleman's attempts to influence and infiltrate the young people of Liverpool will be seen for what they are—a cynical abuse and misuse of the feelings, motivation and anxieties of young people. I wish him no success whatever in the evil campaign that he and his colleagues are embarked upon.

I welcomed the comments of the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) when he said:

"those who support the youth trade union rights campaign are a bunch of dafties".

I welcomed those words, and the approbation given to them tonight by the Opposition Front Bench.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill asked some specific questions about the youth training scheme, and listed seven or eight of them for the attention of the House. He will be pleased to know that the Manpower Services Commission, via its inspectorate, already checks and monitors schemes as they are created, and makes regular visits accordingly.

The hon. Gentleman asked for an improvement in consultation between the applicants and those providing the scheme. The careers service already offers advice to youngsters about the YTS, and regular consultation is available.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the allowance. He knows as well as I that the allowance is a training allowance and does not pretend to be a wage.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Dunn: The hon. Member for Mossley Hill called for training in life skills—something that I see very much as a future role for the schools themselves. He will know also that training in life skills is already part of the YTS.

Mr. Banks *rose*——

Mr. Dunn: I give way to the chairman of the GLC.

Mr. Banks: Will the Minister tell the House whether the Government have any proposals to make the youth training scheme compulsory?

Mr. Dunn: That is a matter that I shall come to later.

Mr. Banks: Will the Minister answer yes or no?

Mr. Dunn: I can say a great deal in the course of a minute.

With regard to training for relevant skills, to which the hon. Member for Mossley Hill referred, he and I know that schemes are approved by the area manpower board, comprising employers, trade union representatives and representatives of the community, and that such schemes are based in the community itself.

As for staying-on rates, over 30 per cent. of 16 to 19-year-olds are now in full-time education, half of them in further education colleges. Here, as before, we seek improvement. We shall continue to raise standards and to raise the quality of what is taught.

The answer to the question by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is, briefly, no.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 182, Noes 274.*

Division No. 236] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo	Ellis, Raymond
Alton, David	Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Anderson, Donald	Ewing, Harry
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Ashton, Joe	Fisher, Mark
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Forrester, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Foster, Derek
Barnett, Guy	Foulkes, George
Barron, Kevin	Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Beith, A. J.	Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Benn, Tony	Freud, Clement
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Garrett, W. E.
Bermingham, Gerald	George, Bruce
Bidwell, Sydney	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Blair, Anthony	Golding, John
Boothroyd, Miss Betty	Gould, Bryan
Boyes, Roland	Gourlay, Harry
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*	Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Hardy, Peter
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Harman, Ms Harriet
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*	Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*	Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Haynes, Frank
Canavan, Dennis	Heffer, Eric S.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Cartwright, John	Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Home Robertson, John
Clarke, Thomas	Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Clay, Robert	Howells, Geraint
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Hoyle, Douglas
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*	Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Cohen, Harry	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Coleman, Donald	Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.	Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Conlan, Bernard	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*	Janner, Hon Greville
Corbett, Robin	John, Brynmor
Cowans, Harry	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*	Kennedy, Charles
Craigen, J. M.	Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Crowther, Stan	Kirkwood, Archy
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Lambie, David
Cunningham, Dr John	Leadbitter, Ted
Dalyell, Tam	Leighton, Ronald
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*	Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Deakins, Eric	Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Dewar, Donald	Litherland, Robert
Dobson, Frank	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Dormand, Jack	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Douglas, Dick	Loyden, Edward
Duffy, A. E. P.	McCartney, Hugh
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.	McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Eastham, Ken	McGuire, Michael
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*	McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*

McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Farr, Sir John
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*

Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

*See Mr. Speaker's ruling at column 898.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have just walked through the Lobby and come out, and found that the Tellers have disappeared. The exit door of the Lobby was open, but the tellers had gone. I do not know on what basis my vote has not been counted. Can you help me?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am slightly surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman saying that, because four Tellers appeared, and as far as I am aware the Division has been correctly recorded. I shall look into the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Mikardo: I am obliged, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognising that 1985 is the International Year of Youth congratulates the Government on the action it is taking to improve the prospects for young people and, in particular, for introducing through the Youth Training Scheme the most imaginative and far reaching training programme since the last war; recognises the tremendous opportunities the scheme has created for young people and look forward with confidence to the introduction of the two-year Youth Training Scheme in April 1986; and welcomes the initiative being taken to provide more effective education for young people.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Enduring Powers of Attorney Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Orders of the Day

ENDURING POWERS OF ATTORNEY BILL *[LORDS]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 58 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed, with an amendment.

Historic Churches (Northern Ireland)

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Chris Patten): I beg to move,

That the draft Historic Churches (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 22nd May, be approved.

This is a short order, but it is no less important because of its brevity. It enables the Department——

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): On a point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker. May we be enabled to hear the Minister?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber would do so as quickly and quietly as possible.

Mr. Patten: I am as surprised as the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) that so many hon. Members should choose to leave the Chamber when this important order is being discussed. Its purpose is to enable the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland to make grants or loans towards expenditure incurred in the repair or maintenance of churches in current use for ecclesiastical purposes and which have been listed as being of special architectural or historic interest.

The order also gives us the power, should we require it, to extend listed building controls to historic churches in current use from some future date. The order brings matters in Northern Ireland into line with what has been the practice in Great Britain or the past nine years.

Hon. Members will be aware that, in Great Britain, grant aid to churches was not prohibited, as has been the case in Northern Ireland, but there was an arrangement under which churches undertook not to ask for state aid for the maintenance of their buildings, in return for which they were exempted from some of the provisions of planning legislation.

In 1975 it was announced that, following studies by the churches in consultation with the Department of the Environment, the Government had accepted in principle the case for some state aid for historic churches. The experimental scheme has now been in operation for 10 years. In Northern Ireland, we are prevented from making a grant to listed buildings which are being used for ecclesiastical purposes by article 83 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. These buildings are also exempted from listed building control for works or alteration or extension, but not for demolition. The churches in Northern Ireland have experienced problems similar to those experienced in Great Britain—rising costs of repair and maintenance. They therefore made strong representations to the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland for a scheme to provide financial assistance towards the upkeep of listed churches, similar to that which obtains on this side of the water.

I realise that there are strong arguments against grants for that purpose. It is said with some force that parishioners should bear the costs of repair. Nevertheless, on balance, I believe that there is an even stronger case for acceding to the representations of the Church authorities and for making grants. Therefore, on 5 July 1983, I announced that a suitable scheme would be introduced in the Province. After a great deal of consultation with all of the interested parties, including various churches, the legislative proposals have been drawn up.

As the House would expect, we have discussed these matters extremely thoroughly with the Church authorities during the past 18 months. The draft order was also debated in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The report of the Assembly approving the proposal was laid before the House on 15 March. I note the absense of one or two hon. Members, doubtless for good reasons.

Hon. Members will see that the order provides first, for the making of grants or loans towards expenditure incurred in the repair and maintenance of listed churches currently in ecclesiastical use. Secondly, it allows us to extend listed building control to listed churches in current use from a day to be appointed. Thirdly, it gives us power to appoint committees of the Historic Building Council to advise my Department on the operation of the scheme.

Hon. Members may wish to be aware of the Department's proposals for the administration of the scheme of grant aid. The initial annual budget will be £150,000. I realise that that is necessarily a small crock of gold. We arrived at that sum by extrapolating from Scottish experience, which seems adequately sensible. Scotland has a budget that is about four times the size of ours for about four times as many buildings. The Church authorities were aware of that sum from an early stage, at least from the time of our meeting with the Irish Council of Churches in December 1983. Their understandable wish that that sum should be larger has not detracted from their support for the order.

Grant aid will be fixed at 33·33 per cent. of eligible costs subject to a limit of £25,000 for any particular scheme in a single year. Schemes that would attract grants in excess of £25,000 should be phased over a period of years.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Can my hon. Friend tell the House how many historic churches and historic buildings are to be considered for such grants, because, as he said, it is a small sum of money?

Mr. Patten: Initially, we are talking of about 85 churches that are A or B-plus listed. That number may increase as we carry out, with the Historic Buildings Council, a review of all the churches that are listed. But at least initially the figure is 85. I accept that the amount of money that we can afford is not as great as most of us would like. It is therefore all the more important that we should concentrate the money with respect to both the number of churches and the work that we can do on those listed buildings.

Grant aid will be restricted to repair and maintenance of the external fabric of church buildings and associated works such as the treatment of dry and damp rot, which underlines the point that I have just made to my hon. Friend. Bells, stained glass windows and internal furnishings will not be included. Again, we are rightly following the practice on this side of the water.

We shall not take the denominational aspect into consideration in any way in making grants. It will be a matter of first come, first served, for the limited funds available, though the church authorities, in consultation with the Historic Buildings Council, may wish to agree on a sensible way of controlling the queue of about 85 potential recipients of aid. I stress that the operation of the scheme will be carefully monitored, and reviewed if necessary in the light of experience.

It is not the Government's early, let alone immediate, intention to make churches in Northern Ireland subject to

listed building control. That would be done only following careful consideration and widespread consultation. There is no question of our taking such a step unless it is taken on this side of the water. There is equally no question of our automatically following in the wake of whatever is done in Great Britain. I wholly accept that were we to consider with the Church authorities—and with hon. Members, for that matter—any move in that direction, we should have to face up, among other things, to the considerable financial consequences.

I realise that the order would be even more cheerfully received in some quarters were we able to spend more money on the grants available under it. We have stepped up our activities in conservation and listing, but we still have a long way to go, and I fear that we may disappoint almost as many people as we can satisfy for some time to come. Nevertheless, I believe that the order is a small step in the right direction. I repeat that it is welcomed by the Church authorities, and, indeed, was pressed on us by them.

Against that background, noting again that I regard this as an experimental scheme which we may need to modify in the light of experience, I commend the order to the House.

10.24 pm

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): May I apologise for the absence of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley West (Mr. Archer) and my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell)? They are tonight in the Province. May I also apologise for being a little late? I am afraid that we must speak to the Attorney-General and tell him to nod a little more slowly. I hope that the House will accept my apologies and the fact that I am making my maiden speech from the Dispatch Box. I am happy to say that the Labour party will not be opposing the order.

The order would enable the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland to make grants or loans towards the expenditure incurred in the repair or maintenance of churches. These churches, of course, must be in current use for ecclesiastical purposes and should have been listed as being of special architectural or historic interest. It would also bring such historic churches within the system of limited building control. It has always been considered an anomaly that listed churches in Northern Ireland are treated differently from those in England, Scotland and Wales, where specific grant aid schemes have been in operation for the past eight years. I have some experience of the situation in Scotland.

That anomaly is somewhat accentuated when one considers that there are about 560 listed churches in a total of 6,500 listed buildings throughout Northern Ireland. If we are to have league tables, it is accurate to say that the Church of Ireland, as the press has pointed out, comes top of the table with 195 listings. That is followed by the presbyterians with 174, and the Roman Catholic Church with 135. I should like to ask the Minister why the order does not come into force for another year—until April 1986. I note that the order will not be retrospective. However, as the provision for listed church buildings in Northern Ireland is now to be brought into line with that in the rest of the United Kingdom, we should be thankful that the order is before us at all. I note that the Northern Ireland Assembly has carried out its usual useful function of scrutinising the order before its appearance in the House. The Environment Committee recommended that the proposals contained in the order be approved, although it made some comments upon it.

I shall not weary the House at this late hour—that would be completely inappropriate for a Deputy Chief Whip deputising as a Northern Ireland spokesman—with a recital of the recommendations. I shall merely content myself with noting the comments of the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder), that the Assembly was concerned with administrative arrangements and broadly welcomed the proposals. That is the view of the Opposition.

10.27 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I am sorry that we have temporarily lost the presence of the Leader of the House, because I was going to address to him a word of gratitude for having provided, by suspension of Standing Orders, for extra time whereby this Government measure could, if necessary, be discussed at large by those who wished to debate it. It is not a subject upon which, in recent memory, the Leader of the House has always been so generous. I hope that it is a habit that he will continue and extend.

From that commendation, I turn to something short of commendation on the performance of Her Majesty's Opposition. It is true that one Secretary of State can act for any other Secretary of State, but it is unheard of for one shadow to act for another shadow especially as that shadow of a shadow is a Deputy Chief Whip.

I have to say to the absentees—I hope that my words will reach them in due course—that it is no excuse for absence from debates in the House on Northern Ireland to be in the Province. It would be more proper for hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies to seek on that ground from time to time to excuse themselves. The House has first claim upon the attention of its Members, not least upon those who represent their own party from their respective Front Benches.

While I am on this topic, let me offer a friendly word of advice to the shadow Northern Ireland spokesmen. If they are very inquisitive about circumstances in Northern Ireland and want to know what to look at and when, it is no bad idea to consult—occasionally, at any rate—those who know and who are elected to represent Northern Ireland in this House.

There has been a notable lack of communication between the present Opposition Front Bench Northern Ireland team and hon. Members representing constituencies in the Province. It is no substitute for that kind of consultation to be absent in the Province when Northern Ireland affairs are debated in this House. I hope that these remarks will be noted in the quarters where action can be taken upon them.

When I studied the order, an aspect of the commencement clause at first struck me as curious. Article 6*(a)* comes into operation on such day as the Minister—I am translating into direct rule terminology—may by order appoint, whereas the remainder of the order, apart from articles 4 and 6*(a)*, comes into operation

"on the expiration of 2 months from the day on which it is made."

It is curious that an article which repeals article 33(1) of the 1972 order should come into effect upon the fiat of the Minister, whereas article 3 comes into effect upon a predetermined day—two months after the making of the order.

At first I was incautious enought to think that this was a curiosity which might owe something to that carelessness which the examiner of statutory rules occasionally detects in his valuable work of examining Northern Ireland statutory instruments. However, further reflection convinced me that there was a more sinister explanation to this apparently curious phenomenon.

The Bill, or rather the order—I correct myslf. I hope that my reference to a Northern Ireland Order in Council as a Bill is an unconscious anticipation of the future. The order does two completely separate and unconnected things. First, it abolishes the exemption on buildings in ecclesiastical use from the planning provisions limiting the alterations and so on that may be carried out on those buildings. That is the purpose of article 4. Secondly, it makes it possible in Northern Ireland, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, to pay grants to listed buildings, even though they are in current ecclesiastical use.

These two effects have no logical or necessary connection with one another. The Minister informed us that there was no early prospect that the abolition of the exemption of listed ecclesiastical buildings would be brought into effect. Indeed, in a letter to my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) on 11 May, following a ministerial meeting with two of my colleagues, who are present tonight, and myself, the Minister said:

"There is at present no legal constraint on applicants to prevent them from altering listed churches".

That is an understatement. There is at present no legal constraint on anyone altering listed churches. He went on to discuss the consideration being given to removing that exemption in the rest of the United Kingdom.

I agree with the Minister that the removal of that exemption is a serious course of action which should not be taken without considerable prior consultation and reflection and that it could act as a deterrent to those responsible for listed churches seeking to preserve them in the immediately coming years.

In those circumstances, I do not think that it is a proper use of legislation to enact the abolition of exemption and then to leave it suspended with power for a Minister to bring it into force. If such legislative provision is to be made, it should be made in its own right. We should not have to discover by examining the commencement article of an order that such a power is being enacted now and that the exemption is being abolished now subject to commencement on such date as the Minister may by order appoint. I do not believe that that is the right way to go about the matter.

If there is no present intention to remove the exemption, and we may be forgiven for being somewhat hesitant about assuming this, there would have been no inconvenience whatever in not enacting the abolition of the exemption in this order but coming forward with a separate proposal at the proper time. At the least, in any proper form of legislation the giving of effect to article 4 should have been reserved to some procedure that was subject to proceedings in this House. I appreciate that that is difficult to accomplish due to the restrictions under which we labour with direct rule, as the vast majority of subordinate legislation in respect of Northern Ireland in no way comes before the House, but that merely illustrates how much better legislation for Northern Ireland could be framed and effectuated by means of a proper Bill. The provision could then have been contained in the Bill, with an arrangement for it to be brought into effect by an affirmative order, which would bring the matter to the attention of the House once again.

I therefore register our complaint at this advantage—an improper advantage, we would argue—of the Order in Council procedure to enact now a provision that is not to come into effect until some undetermined date.

The question of what Iain Macleod and I used to call "needs and means" was dealt with at some length, though perhaps not at fully adequate length, by the Minister. The incompatibility between the needs and the means will

cause the main difficulties that the order and its adminstration will encounter. The facts of the matter were set out by the Minister and have already been rehearsed today. No fewer than 545 churches in Northern Ireland are listed buildings. In relation to a total of that magnitude, an annual budget of £150,000 is nugatory.

Mr. Chris Patten *rose*——

Mr. Powell: Perhaps I can just conclude this part of my remarks, as I may anticipate the Minister's intervention. He has stated that a short list is to be compiled, comprising the present A and B grade churches but to which others may after consideration and investigation be added. He estimates that the total size of that effective list for consideration may be about 85 churches. I still believe that 85 churches on a short list for an annual budget of £150,000 is completely unrealistic. If that unrealism is not to be completely disastrous and cause more ill will than good will among those whom the measure is intended to benefit, some stern administrative measures must be taken. The idea that there can be a painless subdivision or distribution of £150,000 among a short list of 85 listed ecclesiastical buildings is completely unrealistic.

Some suspicion of the difficulty is revealed in the Minister's explanation, in the letter to which I referred, of how he intends to marshall the queue. Perhaps I might read what he said in that letter, although I noticed that he qualified it in his speech this evening. He said:

> "Various methods of ordering the short listed churches were considered, including selection by greatest need, by the number of listed churches in each denomination or by the architectural or historic 'worth' of the individual churches, before it was decided that applications should be dealt with strictly in the order in which they are received."

This first-come, first-served rule was justified on the ground that,

> "to do otherwise would be to introduce an unacceptable degree of subjectivity which would inevitably lead to disharmony."

It is ludicrous to say, when there are 85, or 545—whichever way one looks at it—potential bidders for grant, and when one does not even know when the starting pistol will go off, that first come will be first served. Will there be arrangements such as one finds in competitions organised by newspapers, so that the first application opened by the junior clerk in the Department of the Environment will be deemed to have been received first, or will it be the postmark on the envelope, or will it be the date on the letter? What will be the rationality in this unseemly scramble, which is to be the only method proposed for marshalling the queue?

It is ridiculous for the Government to say that, of all the possible contenders, it will be first come, first served, but we have no ideas—at any rate, we have not explained them to those most concerned—how to set out in this race to be first in the queue. In the House, for private Members' Bills or private Members' motions, we have a system of ballots. Why did not the Government think of a ballot, which might be conducted by the Clerks of the Assembly? It might be the last act that they will perform before disappearing into oblivion. Why were they not asked to conduct a ballot among the 85 applicants and arrange them in the order that the names were drawn from the hat?

That conclusion was reached—I hope that it will not be maintained—after rejecting methods that one might have thought were reasonable. I am sure that it will have occurred to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that selection by greatest need was not an irrational method of selection. Admittedly, it was selective, but selection by greatest need is something for which Governments and Ministers take responsibility all the time. One might almost say that the allocation of resources to greatest need is what we keep Ministers for. That method was considered, only to be rejected.

Then there was the criterion of the architectural or historic worth of churches. If the object is to preserve buildings which are of architectural or historic worth, one would have thought that that might be a sensible criterion to apply when deciding which of the claimants should have the highest priority. Judgment is needed. It is a dereliction of judgment and inconsistent with the claimed purposes of the order to throw the reins on the horse's neck and say, "There are the 85; let's see which of them turn up first, and it will be the first three or the first six who turn up who will get the first slice of the cake."

The Under-Secretary of State will land himself in much more trouble by doing it that way than by applying a more rational criterion. Ulster people are not so irrational that they cannot understand that grants for the preservation of listed buildings bear some relation to the need for expenditure upon particular buildings and the worth and architectural value of those buildings. That idea is not absolutely impossible for the well disposed to sell, even among competing claimants. But there is a need for judgment. That is perhaps greater and more difficult to exercise in Northern Ireland than it is on this side of the water.

The historic and architectural value of the churches of different denominations can be different in kind. A judgment between the Roman Catholic cathedral in Newry and the Church of Ireland cathedral at Downpatrick in my constituency is a judgment of items which belong to different categories and different standards of value and merit. If one supposes that both are listed buildings, I am not suggesting that it would be easy to establish a common scale against which both buildings could be measured. The same could be true of the very many distinguished dissenting meeting houses. I apologise to my Ulster colleagues for the grating sound of Anglican vocabulary, but that is what they were when they were first erected, so perhaps I shall be excused upon that ground.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Powell: I am glad to have obtained the approval and pardon of my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) for my chosen adjective.

Many of those meeting houses are extremely distinguished buildings. There is an extremely distinguished meeting house at Kilmore in my constituency—as it happens, only two or three miles from Downpatrick cathedral. I should be interested to know how one would set about judging the respective architectural or historic worth of that meeting house, which I am sure is a listed building of a high category, and of a Church of Ireland building such as that to which I have referred. These judgments ought to be made and ought to be seen to be made, and they will have to be made if the money, such as it is, which is to be spent upon this purpose is to be administered in a way that is rational and defensible. If we were to ask the Under-Secretary of State why the first slice of grant was given to the Kilmore Presbyterian meeting house, it would be unsatisfactory if we were told that it got

[Mr. Powell]

in first and that its application was received a whole week before the application of the Roman Catholic church in Strangford which, in its way, is an equally remarkable and interesting building which may, for aught I know, be of high architectural value.

The practical solution that I offer to the Under-Secretary of State to assist his purposes is that he will have to be responsible, or he will have to find someone through whom he can be responsible, for genuine acts of judgment which will have to be performed with great severity. Unless we are to fritter away in penny packets, or almost penny packets, this small annual budget, it will have to be spent upon urgent and important work, and acts of difficult judgment and discrimination will have to be made. They should be acts of judgment which can be defended and be seen to be rational.

The Minister is making provision in article 5 of the order for afforcing the Historic Buildings Council. The suggestion was made in discussion elsewhere that representatives of the churches might be put on that council, and probably the Minister was wise to be cool towards that suggestion and to say that his prime object in afforcing the council was to increase the degree of historical and architectural expertise that was available in the council.

However, the Minister will have to go further than that and set up a specific advisory body to make, to be seen to make and to show public cause for making, exactly those difficult judgments that at present he is threatening to spurn by using the method of first past the post or first at the head of the queue.

The Minister must safeguard and husband the relatively small finance that is to become available for ecclesiastical listed buildings in Northern Ireland. He must husband it not only by preventing it from being frittered away in small packets but by being sure that there is genuine outstanding merit and need in the applicants which are chosen for early receipt of what I hope will be large single grants under the order. By "single", I do not necessarily mean not spread out over several years. I mean really large projects which might absorb a considerable part of the annual budget for several years.

In restricting the scope of these grants as they are restricted in Great Britain, to the external fabric, a mistake is being made, as so many mistakes in relation to Northern Ireland are made, by failure to understand, appreciate and be sensitive to some of the peculiarities and merits of Northern Ireland.

There are some distinguished Church of England churches in this country of which the principal historic interest is their internal fittings. I can think of a Shropshire church which has absolutely intact the Commonwealth fittings dating from the 1650s. They are objects of great interest and are preserved on that account, and that is by no means unique. However, I do not think I would be contradicted in saying that in Great Britain, and certainly in England, the fabric of the churches is essentially their lasting glory and that element of them that calls for protection and preservation.

I am far from sure that that assertion could be made with the same confidence of the churches in Northern Ireland which, as listed buildings, will mainly come under the scope of the order, and I will give two examples to illustrate the significance of two of the deliberate omissions from the scope of the grants. I shall first give an example of furnishings.

I do not know whether the Minister, who is a voracious and active traveller in Northern Ireland and a rubber-necked Minister when he is in the Province, has had the good fortune to visit St. James's—I hope that I have given the correct name—in Waringstown and has seen the magnificent Jacobean furniture which was recently restored and lovingly preserved. It would be impossible to distinguish between the merits of the church furniture and the fabric of that church. Indeed, the fabric was made for the furnishings more than the furnishings were made for the fabric. I dare say that my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, South, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will later confirm that that could be true especially of the meeting houses of the Presbyterian and other Non-Conformist denominations where the building is ancillary to the internal arrangements and yet where the internal arrangements are of architectural and historic value. That is an example showing why major schemes, which are the proper way to get full value out of the available finance, should not exclude furnishings in appropriate cases.

My second example is stained glass. That might seem a strange nomination for a Northern Ireland Member to make, since the glories of stained glass as we know them in some churches in England which were lucky enough to escape the rage of Puritanism have no corresponding representatives in the Province where the work of destruction was carried out much more by war and rebellion than by Puritan and Reformist prejudices. That does not mean that the windows in the churches in Northern Ireland are not equally part of the building and, in some ways, more part of the buildings than the 15th-century stained glass windows for which the perpendicular south aisles were added to many churches, particularly but not exclusively in East Anglia.

I was going to give an example from my constituency, but I shall give another from the vicinity of Waringstown, since the Minister and the House, if it is accompanying me in these examples, were last in Waringstown looking at St. James's church. One need only go to the mother church in Waringstown which—as all good mother churches in Northern Ireland should — has a Gaelic name, Donaghcloney, and one will find a remarkable edifice. It is not beautiful to the eye. Indeed, it was erected as a village hall by the Lyttle family which owned and ran the mill which, for many decades, was the lifeblood of Donaghcloney.

That hall has been brought into use to replace a tin tabernacle which stood on the basis of the erased pre-Reformation church. It has been brought into use as the parish church in Donaghcloney. It has a splendid set of —I confess it—Victorian windows, brought there from a Church of Ireland church in the Republic which was demolished. I am prepared to say that those windows have a value of their own kind in the Northern Ireland context which ought to be taken into account.

I do not want to dwell too long on this imaginary peregrination. I invite the Minister, when next in Downpatrick, to go—or to go again—into St. Patrick's, the parish church, and look at the east window. The structure itself is late 16th or early 17th century, but I think he will agree that, as in so many Wren churches in the City

of London, the east window in that church is an essential part of the church, and forms part of that for which the preservation of the church is desirable.

I make a plea to the Minister—since there is nothing in the terms of the order which excludes reconsideration—not to be so rigid, in the circumstances of Northern Ireland, in defining the outer limits of what it is that calls for preservation and assistance under the order.

Although I believe that the purpose of the order is probably wise, as on balance the corresponding legislation in Great Britain has probably been wise, we shall run into disaster unless the Minister changes his mind about the method of allocating priorities. We shall run into disaster unless, recognising that he has a limited budget, he deliberately uses that limited budget in a way which will do really big and distinguished things, although that means there can b only a few really big and distinguished things done for the listed buildings in Northern Ireland which are in ecclesiastical use.

I hope that the debate will be, as it is intended to be, of use to the Minister, who showed himself understanding and open-minded about the difficulties and dangers which he would encounter when he had a useful discussion with my hon. Friends and myself some weeks ago.

11.1 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The House has listened to a very fine speech from my right hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), who covered many of the salient points of the order.

We are being brought face to face with the question whether a public interest in a building brings with it the need for a public liability in respect of that building. It would seem that there is general agreement that that public interest imposes a public liability, the only question being what the extent of the liability should be. In such cases there is always a balance of interests between the user and the viewer, and I am not sure that we have managed so far to get dead right what that balance should be.

There is, of course, the very real difficulty for the owners of listed churches that they are now to lose some of their freedom of action by virtue of being listed. In looking through the total number of churches involved, to which my right hon. Friend referred, I was most surprised. I managed to find 84 A listings, but I understand, from what my right hon. Friend said, that there are 85 A and B-plus listings. There are 24 Church of Ireland A buildings and eight B-plus buildings. The Roman Catholics have four A and 24 B-plus buildings. The Presbyterians have four A and seven B-plus buildings. The Methodists have four A and seven 3B-plus churches. The Non-Subscribing Presbyterians, surprisingly, out of a total of 20 churches, have three A and five B-plus buildings. The Society of Friends has one A, and the Moravians have one A.

One is led immediately into the question of the division of money among the churches. My right hon. Friend covered that point in great detail. The Minister should look at it again, because the figures that I have quoted are an absolute nest of worms in this context. I hope that the Minister will take account of what my right hon. Friend has said, because I would be very worried about the first-come-first-served principle.

In my inquiries I have also noticed that the listed categories for Scotland and Northern Ireland are the same, in that they are A, B-plus and B, whereas in England and Wales the gradings are 1 and 2. When the Minister replies to the debate, will he be kind enough to tell us exactly what the differences are between those various gradings? It is relevant to the question how a church listed in Northern Ireland compares with a church listed in England. It may be that wholly different criteria apply. The listing may depend upon the context of the building rather than on a common level throughout the United Kingdom.

I was surprised to hear the Minister say that he had only a quarter of the money for Scotland, and that Scotland had roughly four times as many such buildings. Can he go further and tell us how many B, B-plus and A graded buildings there are in Scotland compared with similar groupings in Northern Ireland? I understand that the total number of listed churches is in the ratio 4:1, but I am curious about the merit that is attached to them, which should be revealed by the listing. If the ratio is more than 4:1, perhaps the Minister should reconsider the decision to give one quarter of the money for one quarter of the listed buildings.

I should like a clear explanation of what the ecclesiastical exemption consists of. The case of the Howard United Reform church upset people's understanding of the position, and seemed to turn the haycock upside down. The owner of churches in Northern Ireland would like to be told what use the ecclesiastical exemption now is. Can one use it to demolish a building which is no longer in use or needed?

A large problem regarding redundant churches is building up steadily in Northern Ireland. Many people seem to think that churches have become redundant only in Belfast because of the vast movement of the population during the past 15 years, mainly because of terrorism, but that is not the case. Many rural churches, of practically all denominations, although mainly of Protestant denomination, are in areas where the population has greatly decreased. I can think of Presbyterian churches and churches of my own denomination, whose congregations are much smaller than they were 150 years ago. That is not to say that the total number of people has decreased, but there has been a tremendous amount of movement from rural areas to towns, with a corresponding drop in church population. It causes enormous difficulties for some congregations and parishes. I hope that we shall not get into the rut of thinking that redundant churches occur only in larger urban areas. The problem extends across the Province.

All denominations continually make the case that there should be some sort of appeal procedure against the listing of a church. That may be difficult, because the Churches may have reasons for not listing it, usually regarding disposal or lack of use of the church, whereas there may be architectural merit that demands that it should be listed. If there were an appeal procedure, it would be welcomed by everyone, because we need to have all the facts of each individual case brought into the open so that people know exactly why a building is listed.

I have studied the listings of the various churches, especially those in my own area, which I know well. In some instances, the reason for the listing is plain, but in others I have some difficulty in identifying the outstanding merit that has led to the placement. It seems that most of the churches have found their way on to the list in one way or another. When I tabled a parliamentary question, the Minister was unable to tell me how many churches had

[Mr. William Ross]

been inspected and left off the list. I hope that we shall be told what percentage of the churches in Northern Ireland have been put on the list.

I am concerned about the loss of ecclesiastical exemption, but my fears may be allayed to some extent when the Minister gives an explanation of the benefit that will accrue to Churches from the exemption in the light of the Howard United Reform Church case, which was taken to another place. I make a plea that the grant or the loan should not mean automatically the loss of ecclesiastical exemption. The exemption must give some benefit to the Churches that come within it. I should not like to see a small grant or loan used as an excuse for tying a Church's hands and those of the denomination for all time.

Everyone who has read the order accepts that a grant or loan of £150,000 will be a drop in the ocean. There must be some Church involvement in the listing procedures, and we must endeavour to determine how we marshal the applicant Churches in order of priority. There must be a system which is acceptable to the Churches which belong to the various denominations that are affected, so that they do not feel that they are being hard done by.

In inquiring into the order, I took the precaution of writing to the four major denominations. They all kindly replied to me setting out their views. There is deep concern about the way in which the money is being distributed. That concern can be allayed only if there is a Church involvement. It is feared that that would lead to an unwieldy committee which would include representatives of all Churches. If it is only an advisory committee, that unwieldiness might well be acceptable.

A consultation document has been drawn up by the Department of the Environment and a similar paper has been circulated in Scotland. When the Minister replies, I ask him to tell us what effect the document is having upon the future of listed churches in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. There is bound to be a spin-off from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, or vice versa. The issue runs right across the sea and we should not close our minds to the consultation paper.

That leads me to sections 16 and 19 of the paper. Section 16 states:

"The internal structure, decorations and fittings of a church may be of fundamental importance to its liturgical and other religious purposes. It may be argued that to apply normal listed building controls to church interiors would risk impinging on the churches' freedom to decide on the form of their worship. However, some interior alterations, particularly those involving structural work, may damage the aesthetic quality for which a building has been listed. In that case, it can be argued that the Government has a duty to safeguard the interiors as well as the exteriors of buildings included in the statutory list."

Section 19 tell us:

"In some cases, however, this would exempt from control those very features for which a church had been listed; many buildings with plain exteriors contain a wealth of important church fittings which would thus be totally exempt from listed building control".

A building with a plain exterior that required considerable money spent on it would not be eligible for a grant if the internal features were not taken into account. That would not be acceptable. A building has to be looked at as a whole, interior and exterior.

My right hon. Friend the Member for South Down commented on Jacobean furniture. I have been in two churches which are plain buildings with a seating arrangement based on the family unit, so that the pews are all built in a square. There may be other such churches in Londonderry. Such features are well worth preserving, because, although they are not modern looking, they are a tie with the past. Such churches should not be left out of the running just because of the plainess of their outsides.

My right hon. Friend also spoke about stained glass windows. I cannot understand how windows can be left out of this order, because most stained glass windows embody in their structure a considerable amount of stonework that can be seen from the outside and is part of the architecture of the building. One should not leave such windows aside. My church has stained glass windows, with stonework visible from the outside, and that is very much part of its character.

Article 83 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972, which is being altered by this order, says that grants and loans for the preservation of listed buildings should be for

"the repair and maintenance of any objects ordinarly kept in the building."

If we are changing that order, we should do so in a way that takes account of that provision, which covers the point made both by my right hon. Friend and me.

In that order, article 31(2) (*b*) refers to

"any feature of the building which consists of a man-made object or structure fixed to the building or which forms a part of the land and which is comprised within the curtilage of the building."

I am curious as to what that last phrase means. How does that include walls and gates, which in many cases seem to be the only reason why a building is given listed status? I should have thought that the boundary line runs down the middle of the wall, and I cannot see how the outside of it could be taken to be within the curtilage of the building.

Whenever we talk of churches, most people think of a building, but a church in the true sense is not a building, but a body of people. It is a body of worshippers and believers joined together in a congregation. That may not be as true of the Anglican tradition, of which I am a member, as it is for the tradition of my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth). However, it is still a basic ingredient of a church that it is a body of people. A church is not always the same size, or the same shape; nor does it have the same distribution of people at all times. It is a living and changing body of people, and it is there with a job to do.

That brings me to what concerns me most in the order — the preservation of buildings. The Church is not about the preservation of buildings. Its essence is teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is a quite different matter. I fear that the application of the order will hang a massive millstone around the neck of many congregations and stop them from carrying out their basic function as Christians and believers in the Gospel of Christ.

When I was a boy, all Presbyterian churches were known as meeting houses. During my teens, however, they gradually became known as Presbyterian churches. The change did not meet with universal approval from the congregations. I liked the original term, and still use it quite often. It seems to be generally acceptable to my many Presbyterian friends and neighbours.

In the order, we are taking the first exploratory steps towards securing the right balance between the interests of the user and those of the viewer. I do not believe that we have got it right. When we produce orders such as this I always fear that some people will attempt to get something

on the cheap. My experience of life is that nothing is got on the cheap — someone, somewhere, has to pay. It seems that the Treasury will not put any more money into the Northern Ireland coffers and that the £150,000 comes out of existing money. If so, someone else will go £150,000 short. I should be glad if the Minister would say that there is more money.

As a result of the order, I believe that the interests of the viewer will overtake those of the user and that the Church might lose out in the long run, and none of us wants that.

11.22 pm

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): I welcome the order because it brings Northern Ireland into line with the rest of the United Kingdom.

The explanatory document says that the order will bring historic churches within the system of listed building control, but that is already the case in practice. Part III of the explanatory document says that the order will not lead to an increase in overall public expenditure. Having regard to the derisory amount that is to be provided, one could be forgiven for wondering whether approvals for expenditure will be controlled by the amount available and whether the Churches will find that they are worse off than before.

Even worse is the fact that churches in class B, which do not qualify for grant aid, must maintain their buildings for the benefit of others. My right hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) gave a vivid description of what will happen. The situation should be considered in conjuction with the well-known case, which my hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) mentioned, concerning Bedfordshire county council *v.* Trustees of Howard United Reform Church in May 1975. In that case the other place defined an ecclesiastical building in such a way as to render the Churches unable to demolish their churches if they wanted to without listed building consent.

As a result of the factors that I have outlined, the Churches are not free to redevelop their sites to meet the demands of their work or changed circumstances, nor can they realise the full asset value of their sites for use elsewhere, should they consider that the word of God requires such action. In other words, they have lost their rights in their property, without compensation, and are now saddled with a perpetual commitment without redress. That appears to be contrary to British constitutional law, but it is unlikely that any Church, certainly in Northern Ireland, would have the resources to bring such a case before the House of Lords.

Despite the consultations between the Northern Ireland Department of the Environment and the Irish Council of Churches on the subject of the order, the Churches have been put in a virtually impossible position and little regard seems to have been paid to the implications for their future. In the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 there is provision for compensation for refusal of listed building consent in certain circumstances. The contrary view under article 69 is discretionary, not mandatory, and, to my certain knowledge, there is at least one case of a Methodist church in central Belfast where that has been applied, with the result that no compensation has been paid. It is my view, and that of the trustees of the church, that the reasons given and the contrary case presented by the Department of the Environment were spurious.

The original application to demolish the existing building and erect another on the same site, with church premises within the new building, was expressly to provide a Methodist place of worship and witness for the foreseeable future, together with a rental income to enable that worship and witness to be carried out. As my hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East said, in that church in the centre of Belfast we are all going through a traumatic experience. During the last war, that church was open 24 hours a day to minister for the ex-service men, the service men, the ARP and everyone involved in the war effort. Before 1969, the church was also open 24 hours a day to look after young people in the area and people who needed help. During the troubled times, that church was also there, providing succour for the police and the Army who were carrying out their difficult job in the centre of Belfast. Even today it is open for several hours day and night to cater for the down-and-outs, the unemployed and people who need help and succour in difficult circumstances.

That application was refused, on the grounds that the building was to be listed. All the proposals in the contrary view under article 69 of the 1972 planning order, put forward by the Department of the Environment and fully admitted by its officials, were incapable of providing a place of worship and ancillary premises alongside the notional commercial development, which formed the basis of a refusal to pay compensation.

While I welcome the order, as far as it goes, which is not very far, it is my opinion that the case that I mentioned should be reconsidered and that the House ought to undertake a review of the law in relation to planning legislation and the Churches to safeguard the rights of the various Churches. I hope that the Minister will give my suggestion his serious consideration.

11.28 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I am speaking in the debate because, in a fit of generosity, the Leader of the House has allowed us at least another hour and a half. Accordingly, I should like to use some of that time, although I am amazed as to why, when we are dealing with an order that we cannot change and must accept, we are given such latitude of time, when on other occasions we would have liked to make changes to legislation, which would have been helpful, and for the good of the country, but we were not allowed time to do so.

I should like the Minister to clarify the point mentioned by the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) about the date upon which the order takes effect. If it is to be April 1986, is that an acknowledgement that there is no money available but that money will be released in the next financial year, or is it because someone in the Department is aware that in the near future some work will be done on a building for which no money is available and that, rather than face that difficulty, the Department has put it on the long finger?

As the Minister will be aware, the historic St. George's church in the centre of Belfast has recently completed a major scheme to preserve its witness. There has been a great deal of controversy over that building. If the order is passed tonight, and as the Minister has discretion, I cannot understand why it is proposed to wait until April 1986 before it takes effect. We look forward to receiving an assurance that it will come into effect sooner.

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

I support the points made by my right hon. and hon. Friends for consideration by the Minister and others who will have to implement the order and the scheme. Rather than merely consider the point made by the churches and the Northern Ireland Assembly, there should be a representative of the churches on the decision-making body.

I understand that one of the objections to that is that such people will have a theological point of view only. I do not believe that that is necessarily so. Within the churches there are people who have the historical and architectural expertise to deal with the subject dispassionately. It is not necessary to have a representative from each of the major denominations because, contrary to what many folk have said, I believe that there is greater collaboration between the churches in Northern Ireland than exists centrally in England and Scotland. It is not beyond anyone's capacity to nominate someone to represent the churches dispassionately.

I take up the concept of need to which my right hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) referred. The need for structural work on the building has been emphasised. As I understand it, the force of the order is to provide finance to help that work. My hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) suggested that a small congregation which has been given a legacy of an historic building that it can no longer maintain in a good structural condition may be in greater need than those with a love of history and architecture believe.

I happen to be a philistine.

I share the views of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East about the functions of a church. In an age when there are greater demands upon church members, many people who believe in worldwide evangelism and helping the needy are torn between choosing to help mankind or pouring money into maintaining a building. As well as a need to carry out architectural work on a building, there may also be a need to provide the finance required to do so, because local people are no longer able to supply the tremendous finances that are often required for modern building schemes.

My right hon. Friend the Member for South Down referred to what is locally known as the redemptionist meeting house in Kilmore, and reminded me of the story of the preacher who went to kill rats in the morning and to Kilmore at night.

There are meeting houses through the Province where intrinsic beauty and historic interest lie within. For example, there is exterior architectural merit in the Presbyterian meeting house of Sinclair Seamen's in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker), but the real historic and architectural beauty lies within. The pulpit is in the shape of a ship's prow, signifying the heritage of that meeting house and its links with the sea. I therefore hope that in interpreting the order, attention will be given not only to the exterior of a building but also to the interior which often has an historic value.

In church buildings throughout Northern Ireland, England and other parts of the kingdom, a new revolution is taking place about how an interior should be arranged for the proper exercise of worship. That was no doubt one of the concerns in the minds of those who framed the order, but if its purpose is to preserve historic buildings, we must be prepared to say that finance will be made available.

My right hon. Friend the Member for South Down spoke of the absence of Opposition Front Bench spokesmen. For some time, a pattern has developed whereby Ministers who visit Northern Ireland constituencies inform the Members concerned either the day after or the day on which they are in the constituency. If constituency Members are expected to welcome such visitors, we should like to know earlier, so that we can plan accordingly.

I also regret to say that a habit is developing whereby Northern Ireland Members no longer need to know what is happening in their constituencies. Ministers may be security conscious, but it is tragic if they cannot trust hon. Members, whereas from now on they will have to trust Sinn Feiners in local councils.

11.39 pm

Mr. Chris Patten: First, I welcome the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) to our debates. I think that his speech today was his first contribution to a Northern Ireland debate, and I congratulate him on his maiden speech from the Front Bench. I am sure that it will not be his last speech from that Bench, although if we are unlucky it may be the last time that we hear from him on the affairs of the Province. I share the hon. Gentleman's gratitude for the sensible and thoughtful comments of the Assembly, which includes some who are also Members of this House.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the figures for the denominations of churches which are listed buildings in all categories, but I think that it is more relevant to consider those in categories A and B-plus, a breakdown of which was given by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), to whose comments I shall return later.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) made as interesting and informed a speech as one would expect from him. I hope that it will not be taken as too critical an observation or suggest that I am overly thin skinned about this if I say that his speech and some others reminded me of how much trouble one can heap on one's head by trying to do a small amount of good, although as a Tory I am not at all surprised by that. One just has to take a little care in these matters.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the removal of the exemption and suggested that taking these powers might act as a deterrent to people concerned to obtain listing for a building in which they are interested. We have no evidence to suggest that that is the case. I think that the right hon. Gentleman was on more substantial ground when he developed his argument about the type of power that we have taken in this respect, but, given the undertakings that I set out in my opening speech, I think that the situation should be regarded as reasonably tolerable. The churches certainly regard it in that way, and I hope that the House will take the same view later today.

The right hon. Gentleman and others properly referred to resources, and I accept that £150,000 is a small crock of gold, but if it is an unrealistic figure for Northern Ireland it is equally unrealistic for the rest of the United Kingdom because we have tried to arrive at a figure by extrapolating from experience elsewhere. I shall return to that aspect when I respond to the speech of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East.

I am anxious that we should do more in terms of conservation of both the built and the natural environment, but resources are limited as I am discovering—without, I hope, too many constraints on my discoveries — in attempting to implement both the letter and the spirit of the extremely important and well-received Balfour report. I repeat that £150,000 is not much, and certainly not so much as the Churches would have liked, but there were moments during the debate when some Members seemed to be saying that we would do better to provide no funds at all if we could not provide more. I accept the criticism that we ought to find more, although I am not sure where it could come from, but I am sure that it is better to do this with limited funds than not to do it at all. I repeat that that has been the consistently held view of the Church authorities in the Province, which we have fully consulted.

The question emerges as to what criteria one should apply in allocating those unfortunately but necessarily limited resources. The right hon. Gentleman's Pevsneresque journey round the Province and beyond showed the difficulties in reaching wholly rational, objective and defensible judgments on these issues. I do not wish to heap criticism on the heads of colleagues or of civil servants in Scotland or in England and Wales, but I am bound to say that rationalism has sometimes had a pretty difficult run there. Of course, that is precisely the sort of area on which we shall want to keep an open mind. It is precisely the sort of area on which we shall wish to keep in close touch with the Church authorities, and I believe that our good faith on this issue can be judged by the extent to which we have consulted the Churches consistently and fully during the past 18 months. If, with the council and the Churches, we can work out a more rational way of allocating the funds, so be it. But there are some difficulties in being as rational as the right hon. Gentleman suggests.

As to whether we should include fittings, bells and stained glass windows, I thought, when I heard the right hon. Gentleman developing his interesting case for the differences of the position in Northern Ireland, that I could have made, in terms of my constituency, a speech on both sides of the argument. I could have argued the case for including the fittings of churches, and I could have argued the case against. My principal consideration was that, in concentrating on wind and weather-proofing, we were doing something which was probably imposed on us anyway by the limited funds available.

Given that the funds are limited, we are probably better served by following Great Britain practice. But here again I wish to make it clear to the right hon. Gentleman that we must review our progress as we moved forward. If it seems to us clear that there is a case for including fittings, bells and stained glass windows as well as the fabric of a church, we must make those adjustments and extend our architectural agenda. But I hope that if I or anyone else reaches that decision, we shall have more resources to hand in order to do so.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East, who has taken a special interest in the provisions of the order, and whose interest has, as always, been helpful, not least in obliging Ministers and officials to look keenly at what they are trying to do, asked several questions. First, he asked me to compare the criteria that we apply in Northern Ireland with the criteria that are applied in England and Wales. As the hon. Gentleman will recall, I set out the criteria that we apply in a parliamentary answer to a question from him on 27 February 1985. The exact scales of listings in Scotland and Northern Ireland are slightly different from those which apply in England and Wales, but, broadly speaking, we are applying the same criteria as are applied in England, Wales and Scotland.

I am afraid that I do not have the precise number of A and B-plus churches in Scotland. It was a perfectly fair question, and I should have come armed with an answer to it. I shall provide the hon. Member for Londonderry, East with an answer as soon as possible. However, I repeat that on a rule of thumb basis our understanding was that we were giving to churches in the Province as reasonable a deal as was being given to churches in Scotland, where at least some of the same problems occur.

The hon. Member also asked me about the existing ecclesiastical exemption. He has referred on previous occasions to the House of Lords judgment in 1975, in the case of the trustees of Howard United Reform Church in Bedfordshire, that a church that was about to be demolished could not be considered to be in ecclesiastical use. This point was also mentioned by the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker). Following that judgment, it has been accepted that no exemption from listed building control could be enjoyed by any church where total demolition was involved. It was that judgment, among other matters, which provoked the interest which led to the issue of discussion documents in England, Wales and Scotland. The discussion document was issued in January 1984 in England and Wales and comments were received by July 1984. A similar document was issued in January 1984 in Scotland, and comments were received by March 1985. Comments on the two documents are being considered by my right hon. and hon. Friends and we shall keep in close contact with them while they consider them. We shall want to take account of the decisions that they reach on Great Britain, but I repeat that I do not feel that our hands ought to be bound by whatever decision is reached for Great Britain, although it will be relevant to Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East also asked about the percentage of Northern Ireland churches that had been listed. I cannot provide him with an answer to that question. The listing process in Northern Ireland is not, alas, yet complete, so it is not possible to say how many churches will eventually be rejected. I hope that the increase in the number of staff will mean that the listing process can be completed more rapidly. I regret that there is a backlog and I hope that it will be cleared as quickly as possible. It relates not only to churches but to all other buildings.

The hon. Member for Belfast, North referred to a particular case which he has followed with his customary diligence. He has quite properly chased both me and my predecessor up hill and down dale over it. The problem in that case does not arise just because we are referring to a church. The various planning and listed building problems would relate equally to any type of building. However, we are prepared to review the listing of the building in question and examine whether it can reasonably be given a higher classification, and whether it will qualify for grant. I accept that that does not satisfy all the arguments that the hon. Gentleman put forward, but I hope that he will take it as an earnest of our concern.

The hon. Member for Belfast, North referred to a point that had been made by the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth about when the order would come into force.

[Mr. Chris Patten]

order, with the exception of articles 4 and 6*(a)*, will come into force two months from the day on which it is made, and I hope that we shall be able to start spending money this year under the terms of the order if it passes through both Houses.

I have attempted, within those funds for which I answer in this House, to ensure that during this financial year, we shall have funds that we can start to use. The problem, given how late in the year we shall be starting, will be to spend all of the £150,000 in this financial year. Nothing would please me more than to be able to make substantial progress in spending that money and, before the end of the financial year, to know clearly that we would not have enough. However, because of the time of year at which we shall be starting, I doubt whether we shall find ourselves faced with that problem.

I note what was said about ecclesiastical representation on the sub-committee of the Historic Buildings Council. What we need on that committee, as on the council and on other advisory bodies in the environmental sphere, is vigorous and independent-minded expertise, and I accept that we may be able to secure that expertise from among those who are active leaders of Churches as well as from churchgoers. If so, we will all be the beneficiaries. The important point is to acquire the expertise, from wherever it comes.

I have attempted to deal with the points raised by right hon. and hon. Members in this interesting debate. I hope that the arguments that I have put have been relatively convincing; convincing enough to ensure that the order is made and that, as a consequence, churches in Northern Ireland can benefit from its provisions, albeit not on the scale that hon. Members understandably would wish.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Historic Churches (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 22nd May, be approved.

Soccer Violence

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Donald Thompson.]*

11.58 pm

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): I am sad to have to raise on the Adjournment the question of soccer violence. Now that the dust has settled and temperatures have dropped after the tragic European cup final between Juventus and Liverpool, perhaps we can take a cooler look at the causes of the disaster.

Let me, at the outset, make my position clear about the terrible rise of soccer violence and state unequivocally my condemnation of hooliganism at football games or anywhere else. I speak not as a Liverpool supporter but as a lifelong Evertonian. Like a true sportsman, I have for many years marvelled at and envied Liverpool's magnificent record in domestic and European football and its unique record of 22 successive years in European competition. In none of those years were Liverpool fans involved in any violence on opponents' grounds. On 1 March 1984, following violence at the France-England international, I told the Minister that I was concerned about football hooliganism at home and abroad and referred to the examples set by Liverpool and Everton football supporters over the years. The Minister replied:

"I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman and endorse his statement I am confident that on 25 March the two great clubs from that great city will continue with their excellent behaviour." — [*Official Report*, 1 March 1984; Vol. 55, c. 396.]

That was prior to the Milk Cup final, when Liverpool played Everton.

On 4 April 1984, following a question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry)—he is the chairman of the all-party football committee—I congratulated both Liverpool and Everton supporters on their outstanding behaviour at the two finals. I said that I wished that Everton would reach Wembley in the FA Cup. The Minister replied:

"I must refrain from partiality, but I pay the highest tribute to the football supporters and spectators from both clubs, not only for their exemplary behaviour in recent weeks, but for their continuing good behaviour over many years." — [*Official Report*, 4 April 1984; Vol. 57, c. 955.]

In view of those replies, one must now ask, how did this great Liverpool reputation get trampled in the dust at the Brussels stadium? The name of Liverpool football club and its supporters, the name of our great city and its citizens were knocked by the media hastily in days of tension following the tragedy.

UEFA's decision to ban English teams from competing in European competitions was a panic decision, but FIFA's decision to ban all English teams from playing in foreign countries was a shattering blow to most sane football fans, including the Football League. I understand that the chairman of the Football League, Mr. Jack Dunnett—a former Member of Parliament—has made his feelings clear. The Football Association has also let its feelings be known.

I am not speaking as a Johnny-come-lately football supporter or a know-all, like some of the commentators who made wild statements following the tragedy. I played amateur football for many years in the Liverpool boys' association league, the Catholic men's society football league and the Liverpool and district Sunday football

league. When I was 17 I played in trials for the Everton football club. I have been a lifelong Everton supporter and have a great love for the game.

I had the misfortune to fracture my right ankle and break my nose when playing for my local team of Holy Cross. I am therefore aware of football violence in the field, not off the field. For the past 14 years I have acted as president of the Liverpool and district Sunday football league—the biggest league in Europe.

Now that temperatures have cooled, UEFA and FIFA should think again and allow innocent teams to compete in European competition. A small team like Norwich City, which has been relegated from the first division of the Football League but which would have had its first taste of European football, should not be penalised or its fans prevented from seeing their team play in Europe.

A team like Everton, which won the first division championship by a record number of points, should not be banned from the champions' cup. We all recall that Everton played in Rotterdam only two weeks before the Brussels disaster, and 20,000 Everton fans attended the game. The Dutch police made it quite clear that they felt that the Everton fans were the best supporters they had ever seen. Everton football club went to Wembley not once or twice but four times last year, and there was no trouble whatever among Everton fans at any of those games. Therefore, a team such as Everton and its fans should not be penalised.

I believe that appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that there is never again a disaster such as the one in Brussels, and I hope that the Government will give deep consideration to the question of sensible measures to prevent such a disaster.

I have given my deepest condolences and sympathy to the families of the Italians who were killed. I also offer condolences on behalf of scores of thousands of my constituents and Liverpool citizens who grieve deeply for the people of Turin. Recently there were services at the Roman Catholic cathedral and the Anglican cathedral in Liverpool. Both those great cathedrals were full to overflowing. At the latter service the Italian ambassador and the Secretary of State for the Environment were present, together with other people showing their deep distress at the Brussels disaster.

I am greatly concerned—as are many of my hon. Friends—about the large number of National Front supporters who were present at the game. I have here a book called "Hooligans Abroad". It is a first-class book and I urge the Minister to read it. On the front cover it shows a Fascist thug with a Union Jack painted on his face. Anyone who has watched football on television in recent years will have seen those people, in different parts of the country, carrying Union Jacks with them, sometimes with Union Jacks tied round their necks, and shouting racist slogans from the terraces at coloured footballers. I am sure that those people played a part in the Brussels disaster.

In a ground with 60,000 people the tensions are very high. It does not take many people to get others excited. Unfortunately, when flags are flying all over the ground, people tend to become nationalistic or patriotic. The chants and the shouts then tend to bring out the baser instincts of ordinary, decent football supporters.

I believe that the Brussels stadium was in a very bad and dangerous condition. There should be a full investigation into it. I hope that the Government will take a keen interest in the state of the ground. Indeed, the chief fire officer of the London fire brigade has made it clear in a recent report that the ground was not suitable for staging the match and would not have been licensed even for a friendly game in England, let alone a cup final between teams from two different countries.

I should like to read the conclusion of the report, which was given by a professionally qualified person with no axe to grind. It says:

"The stadium is 50 years old and all the installations (in section Z)"—

that is where the trouble arose—

"appear to be of the same age. There is no evidence of any recent repairs to the barriers, walls, fences or terraces. The general impression is that of long-term neglect, with the exception perhaps of the pitch perimeter fence which appears to be fairly new. Under our legislation the stadium would not have been allowed to operate. It appears that while the attack by Liverpool supporters caused the panic and the resulting stampede, the main direct cause of the deaths was the collapse of the safety barriers near the bottom of the terraces."

I make a plea to the media to realise that the majority of Liverpool supporters are decent people. Anybody who knows the Liverpudlians or the Scousers knows that they are warm-hearted, good people with a sense of humour. We feel this tragedy, and I hope that we shall not be blamed as animals; in fact, I would not even call some of the thugs animals, because that would be an insult to animals.

I hope that the Government will seriously consider supporting the football league and football associations in appealing against the hasty ban by FIFA and especially UEFA in view of the fact that there appear to be other factors involved in the terrible disaster. It is wrong that English football should be isolated from the world football stage, and that we should be considered as the football lepers of the world. I hope that in the near future we shall see English football taking its rightful place in Europe, that both we in England and UEFA have learnt from this terrible tragedy, and that in future all major matches will be played on first-class grounds, which are examined and inspected regularly and policed by professional policemen who are properly equipped and have experience in dealing with riots and big crowds. I hope that the Minister will not speak from a prepared brief but will answer my points.

12.11 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) is to be warmly congratulated on raising this issue. I am sure that hon. Members will wish me to refer to the fact that the hon. Members for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) and for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) are present, showing the concern of Liverpool Members of Parliament on this sad occasion.

We are discussing an event the like of which no one would have foreseen. It is of such a scale and magnitude that during its aftermath many decisive measures must be taken and much thought must be given to restoring the position both nationally and internationally.

I fully respect the view of the hon. Member for Riverside that certain actions taken are detrimental to the standing of English football and to the prospects for English clubs. However, in all seriousness, the scale of the event in Brussels requires action to be taken on a scale which will impose some penalty on English football clubs so that we may put our house in order. That is what the UEFA and FIFA bans are about.

[Mr. Giles Shaw]

I shall now deal with certain constructive measures. First, the Belgian Government have appointed an inquiry into events at the Heysel stadium on that ghastly evening. A parliamentary commission of inquiry consisting of nine members of the chamber of deputies has been set up to investigate the causes and circumstances of the disaster and the lessons to be learnt from it. The House will be interested to know that it is intended that it should report by 6 July. The commission includes deputies from the four Government parties in Belgium and from the three biggest Opposition parties. It will therefore be a commission of broad representation, as is suitable for such an investigation.

The House will also be aware that UEFA is conducted an inquiry into the events, and will recognise that we cannot prejudge its outcome. There is no question, however—the hon. Gentleman was fair enough to make his opinion clear on this—but that English supporters played a significant part in the tragic events. Immediately after the scenes in Brussels the United Kingdom Government offered the fullest condolences to the bereaved relatives of those who tragically died and the fullest assistance in the aftermath. The hon. Gentleman will realise that I have responsibility for the police, and the police in Kent offered the Belgians any assistance that they required. I know that the hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Merseyside police were subsequently in touch with the Belgian police to offer any assistance required in their investigation. Both the Merseyside and Metropolitan police forces are examining film of the riot to ascertain whether they can identify any of the troublemakers. A number of people have so far been positively identified on the film, and they will be interviewed by police officers.

Mr. Parry: I am glad to hear that the Metropolitan police are involved in the investigation. In tonight's edition of the *Liverpool Echo* there is a full supplement on the disaster in Brussels, based on the evidence of those who were there. I shall give the Minister a copy at the end of the debate. There are clear signs that Chelsea, Arsenal and other London supporters were involved. It seems that they had strong London accents and that they were obviously supporters of the National Front. These hooligans must be eradicated from English football.

Mr. Shaw: Many allegations have been made about the presence at the match of those not connected with Liverpool football club or its bona fide supporters. I assure the hon. Gentleman that any evidence that can be provided —I shall be grateful for a copy of the *Liverpool Echo* to which he has referred—will be used as source material to secure, if at all possible, the positive identification of those responsible and the organisations to which they belong. The hon. Gentleman will understand that this will require considerable assessment, as well as police inquiries, and that I cannot prejudge that. However, that assessment must be followed up.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I am grateful to the Minister for allowing me to intervene and to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) for initiating the debate. Did the Merseyside police give any advice to the Belgian authorities before the match was played? If it was given, what notice was taken of it? Can the Minister say anything about the availability of alcohol, especially on the duty-free ferries, on the way to the match and the condition of some of the supporters when they entered the Huysel stadium?

Mr. Shaw: I can confirm that there were visits by police officers from Brussels to the Merseyside police at, I believe, the invitation of the Merseyside police force, to discuss the latter's experience and knowledge of policing football crowds. I cannot answer the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question on the availability of alcohol. He will appreciate that what goes on in a foreign country or outside territorial waters is different from that which occurs in the United Kingdom. I accept the relevance that the hon. Gentleman places upon alcohol in terms of football hooliganism.

Film in addition to that which has been seen already is being sent to the Merseyside policy by the Belgian authorities and Belgian police officers are expected to visit Merseyside police shortly, possibly even this week, in an attempt to identify those involved. I assure the hon. Member for Riverside and his colleagues who are present that every possible step is being taken by the police to provide the assistance that those from Merseyside and elsewhere would wish to see in the aftermath of the scenes in Brussels. Anyone who has evidence that the National Front or any other organisation was involved in organising the violence in Brussels should make it available to the police, who will consider it carefully. That would be the most appropriate step for individuals to take.

Hon. Members will be aware that, in the aftermath of this tragic event, the Government have seen fit to take certain immediate steps, a list of which bears repetition. We recognise that, as a consequence of this event, firm action to deal with hooliganism has been taken on various fronts, by the Government, the police and the courts, the Football authorities and the football clubs to control this cancer that is affecting the game.

Mr. Parry: Does the Minister accept that it is wrong for British football to be completely isolated? Is there any way to ensure that at future European cup games, no fans from here can go to the other country, so that the other team can have its supporters in both legs of the game? There must be some other way than isolating English football from the rest of the world, and allowing ourselves to be treated as football lepers.

Mr. Shaw: I understand the hon. Gentleman's conviction, but there is no way in which the English football crowds, or the English football clubs, can assume that, in the aftermath of what has occurred, the bans imposed by UEFA or FIFA are either unexpected or unacceptable. The hon. Gentleman must note that the football authorities have recognised that these bans are virtually inevitable and have accepted them in the knowledge that the condemnation of international football organisations is a verdict passed on the quality of the English game and its supporters, to enable the English football clubs in time to justify their re-admission to the full competition abroad. This is a severe penalty, but it is a penalty in the light of severe circumstances, which every hon. Member fully understands.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): We accept the serious nature of what happened in Brussels, and no one can condone the action of those responsible for the tragedy. The House will be grateful to my hon. Friend the

Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry), because there is now an opportunity for cooler minds to look at the position. My hon. Friend is saying that many people in the city of Liverpool, its clubs and supporters, believe that the problem of hooliganism, which is a decade or more old, has been passed on to the city. The city is suffering a great deal as a consequence of accepting the guilt for something that, as the Minister will know, is not a problem of yesterday or last week, but of two decades—we have seen the thing growing. I hope that everything will be done to contact those who were at the stadium, to ensure that the truth of the tragic circumstances there comes out, and that the guilt that belongs to football as a whole will not be placed wholly on the shoulders of Liverpool.

Mr. Shaw: I respect the way in which the hon. Gentleman has made that point. I can assure him that we are concerned with a cancer that has afflicted football in this country for far too long. I amplify that by saying that in the Metropolitan police district alone, in the 1984-85 season, some 1,600 people were arrested either inside or in the vicinity of grounds, and a further 1,800 persons were ejected for breach of the ground regulations. Therefore, 3,400 people in the Metropolitan police district alone were in one year involved in hooliganism in football grounds.

I accept that we are not dealing exclusively with the Liverpool clubs, or any individual club, but with a range of increasing violence all over the country year in and year out. Hon. Members present recognise that the problems have occurred with Birmingham, Luton, Millwall, Chelsea and Leeds. With this disaster, the problem has reached such a level that we can no longer delay purging the problem from the football system. We therefore have to take action.

The Government's action is on many fronts. We must remember the tragedy of the Bradford fire when considering stadiums and safety. A ban on alcohol is shortly to be introduced through legislation. All grounds in the third and fourth divisions are to be designated in terms of safety. There are extensive police inquiries here, in Belgium and in UEFA into what happened at the Heysel stadium. Discussions with the football authorities are in train. They will resume tomorrow when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will try to encourage them to find means, through membership schemes and providing proper access, to isolate supporters who are clearly not part of the normal supporting activity of the game.

As for the operation of the law, we must ensure that hooligans are identified and brought to justice. The House will be aware that telecine equipment being provided through the generosity of the Football Trust to about 30 clubs will help to control crowds. Much investment must be made in the security and safety of grounds. Separation of fans is important, and alcohol on transport must ve eliminated so that fans arrive in safety and sobriety and so that arrangements in grounds can be more effective.

There must be progress on all those fronts to restore normality to the game. Football is a national game and should command a substantial family audience. We want to make it once again a normal event to which people can go in perfect safety with their children. We must ensure that there is a national will to do what I have described.

In the wake of the disaster at Bradford, the Government initiated a judicial inquiry under Mr. Justice Popplewell which, among other things, will have terms of reference broad enough to take evidence about the Brussels event. The primary purpose of the inquiry is to see whether the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 is up to the standards that are now required to deal with the problems that have beset the game. I accept entirely the need for a broad assessment of changes to the game, so that we can——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty eight minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 12 June 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NEW WRIT

For Brecon and Radnor, in the room of Tom Ellis Hooson, Esq., deceased.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

PRIVATE BUSINESS

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords]*
Considered.
Amendments agreed to.
To be read the Third time.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration read.
To be considered tomorrow.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (TROWSE BRIDGE) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Sports Council

1. **Mr. Pendry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when next he plans to meet the new chairman of the Sports Council to discuss the future development of the Sports Council.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Neil Macfarlane): I meet the chairman frequently and will be meeting him next week. A meeting to discuss the council's corporate plan has been arranged for 4 July.

Mr. Pendry: Is the Minister aware that his appointment of John Smith as chairman of the Sports Council is popular in sporting circles, and that we wish him well? Does he recall the remarks of the new chairman on his appointment, when he said that he would take the appropriate initiatives to heal the wounds between the Central Council of Physical Recreation and the Sports Council and to bring about the unity necessary to rebuild sport in the United Kingdom? Will the Minister use his best endeavours to assist Mr. Smith to bring about that desirable aim?

Mr. Macfarlane: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments about the new chairman of the Sports Council, who will be an admirable successor to Mr. Jeeps. Obviously, the House is aware that the rapport between the Sports Council and the CCPR has been of major concern to the hon. Gentleman. He has rightly identified a most important issue. The governing bodies can take courage from what the new chairman said at the inaugural press conference as a most constructive way forward. I am happy to tell the House that the new chairman has already met the chairman of the CCPR to discuss effective measures for future co-operation. I am at their disposal to help in any way that I can.

Mr. Denis Howell: Can the Minister tell us anything about the progress of the Government, with or without consultation with the Sports Council, in dealing with the football violence that besets the entire country? Is he aware that it is now 13 weeks since the Prime Minister took her initiative and that in that time none of my hon. Friends, nor anyone with responsibility in the Labour party, has been consulted, despite our offer of help and the plea of the Government in seeking help? When will we be consulted? When do the Government intend to introduce legislation? Bearing in mind that there are only 11 weeks before the season starts, how on earth can we pass legislation and get the money and the work done in time for next season?

Mr. Macfarlane: I am at the disposal of the House. The question refers to the future development of the Sports Council. I am more than happy to discuss these important issues. A meeting is to take place later this afternoon with my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Prime Minister, other Ministers and the football authorities. Next week I am chairing the third meeting of a working party to assess the cost and effect of the work that will have to be done before August and the kick-off for the new season. I have concluded the first round of a meeting with Ministers of the eight countries in Europe to decide how we can improve and develop the importance of football within Europe. This series of measures is designed to ensure that recent tragic events are never repeated.

Oil (Onshore Drilling)

3. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the environmental implications of current and planned onshore drilling for oil.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Kenneth Baker): My Department's circular 2/85 provided guidance to mineral planning authorities in preparing development plan policies and deciding individual applications. On 3 June we published a booklet setting out the environmental safeguards at each stage of development. These seek to achieve the right balance between the nation's need for oil and its concern to protect the environment.

Mr. Wainwright: I welcome the booklet, but can the Minister give an assurance that the damage to the quality of local life in all future drillings will not be any greater than that splendidly achieved at Lockton in north Yorkshire during the past 10 years? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that if he applies the Lockton standard firmly, there need not be any public alarm or significant damage to the quality of life?

Mr. Baker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his most helpful comments. Many people are quite rightly

concerned about the environmental implications. If we are to maximise this country's potential wealth and oil reserves there must be drilling, but it must be done in an environmentally acceptable way. The hon. Gentleman has drawn our attention to a way in which it can be done very well, and it is our objective to extend those standards.

Mr. Ward: Is my right hon. Friend aware that drilling for exploratory wells is about to commence in Poole harbour? We accept its necessity and appreciate the co-operation and planning on the part of BP in all its operations both in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Viscount Cranborne) at Wytch farm. If the Wytch farm standards are applied elsewhere, the public interest will be served both from the point of view of recovering oil and of protecting the environment.

Mr. Baker: Again I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know only too well the pressures placed on Members of Parliament as a result of such developments, but it has been shown that such developments can be carried out in an environmentally acceptable way. I, too, commend the arrangements that BP has made, together with Dorset county council. Indeed, I am glad that this has not become a party political matter, because it is in the interests of the country as a whole.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: When cases go to the Secretary of State on appeal for his consideration, will the Minister ensure that some degree of equivalence is applied to them? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the Secretary of State gives the same consideration to the people of south-east England when they find a few nodding donkeys near their gardens as was given, for example, to applications for opencast coalmining in south Wales, with its consequent ravaging of the environment?

Mr. Baker: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. There are three stages to the development of oil: exploration, appraisal and development. At each of the three stages there has to be a separate licence and a separate planning application. We also insist upon proper restoration and after-care. However, I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's remarks. If we had imposed some concern for restoration and after-care on the industrial development that took place in the 19th century, we would not have so many of the industrial scars that we see today.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: In the context of mineral extraction, if my right hon. Friend has a chance to speak to his right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Energy, will he put it to them that if it is their intention to proceed with turning Solihull into a coalmining community, it must be done with the maximum environmental sensitivity——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the question is about onshore drilling for oil, and his point seems rather wide of that.

Improvement and Repair Grants

4. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he collects information on how many local authorities are currently giving discretionary improvement and repair grants.

6. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities currently have a block on accepting or processing new improvement grant applications; how many of those are in urban areas; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): Responsibility for administering the home improvement grant system rests with local authorities. The Department does not collate information in the form requested on the grant approval practices of individual authorities.

Mr. Fraser: The Minister's answer shows how little interest the Government have in repairs. May I inform the hon. Gentleman that only a handful of local authorities now deal with new applications for improvement and repair grants because of the cuts in housing investment programmes and the freezing of capital receipts? There was a pre-election boom in improvement grants, but there are now thousands of disillusioned people—many of whom are poor—who cannot have any repairs carried out because they cannot obtain help from the local authority. If Environment Ministers are to be more than just the Treasury's errand boys, when will there be a resumption of a reasonable level of repair grants? According to the Minister's own figures, there are 3·5 million unsatisfactory dwellings in this country.

Sir George Young: The local authority is obliged by law to process and award mandatory grants. In Lambeth, discretionary grants are being considered by the local authority. I remind the hon. Gentleman that this year the likely spend on improvement grants will be well in excess of the £90 million spent when he and his Government were last in office.

Mr. Cohen: Is not Waltham Forest, which incidentally is Tory-controlled with Liberal support, one of the increasing number of local authorities putting a block on improvement grants? Does that not mean that many people in Leyton are having the vital means to combat dilapidations cut off? What action will the Government take to restore grants, or will they openly confess that their policy is that good housing is expendable?

Sir George Young: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government make an allocation available to Waltham Forest for housing, and it is up to the authority to decide how much to allocate to improvement grants and how much to other aspects of housing policy. We have made it clear that we hope that it will give priority in improvement grants to those on low incomes, the disabled, and those living in statutory improvement areas. The expenditure on improvement grants in Waltham Forest is likely to be substantially in excess of that six years ago.

Mr. Michael Morris: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a problem in the midlands as well as in London? In the light of the Green Paper, which talks about loans, will my hon. Friend have another look at the basic implementation of improvement grants, and in particular at what the late Anthony Crosland introduced in the late 1960s, because that system worked and people who applied for grants got them?

Sir George Young: As my hon. Friend knows, we have recently issued a Green Paper outlining some new proposals for improvement grants and that will provide the opportunity, which my hon. Friend is seeking, to inject some helpful comments on how we might improve the

system. Until the system is changed, people are entitled to apply under the legislation as it is; and, as I have shown, that is a fairly generous regime.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the deteriorating condition of our housing stock will be adequately tackled through the system proposed in the Green Paper of replacing grants by loans that must be repaid when the owner moves? Will that not simply be a tax on moving and make it even more difficult for the unemployed to get on their bikes?

Sir George Young: An essential component of the Green Paper is the suggestion that the private sector should play a far greater part in restoring the housing stock, together with the owner-occupier. It is not right to expect the public sector to bear the burden of modernising the housing stock. At the end of the day, the responsibility should rest with the owner of the property.

Mrs. Currie: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Green Paper on improvement grants contains much that is immensely worth while, particularly, for example, on the simplification of the designated areas and the definition of what is an unfit property? Therefore, is there any likelihood of early legislation on this important subject?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend will have to await the Queen's Speech to see our legislative proposals, but she is right to draw our attention to the suggestions in the Green Paper. The abolition of the rateable value, for example, will bring entitlement to many more people who are denied it at the moment, and there is a suggestion that there should be more generous compensation for those affected by clearance. There is much in the Green Paper that is worthy of support.

Mr. Hardy: Is the Minister aware that in the Rotherham metropolitan borough more than 600 applicants for improvement grants have been disappointed in recent months, and that that is happening at a time when hundreds of building workers are unemployed? Does the hon. Gentleman accept that Green Papers are no answer to the urgent need for the improvement of Britain's housing stock and the creation of jobs?

Sir George Young: It is up to the hon. Gentleman's local authority to decide how much of its resources to make available for improvement grants. I hope that it will take note of the hon. Gentleman's view that it should give greater priority to this than to other aspects of the programme. As to the Green Paper, if its proposals were followed up there would be better use of public money in that it would be targeted at the people and the buildings that need public sector help.

Asbestos and Toxic Substances

5. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that local communities, community councils and local councils are consulted prior to the dumping of asbestos or toxic substances in their areas.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): Deposit of such wastes is already subject to licensing by county councils in England and by district councils in Scotland and Wales. All authorities can be expected to take account of local opinion in their decisions. In England, county councils are obliged by law to consult district councils.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Minister consider it reasonable that his Department should have exploited a licence which was granted to deal with the dumping of domestic asbestos in Glenboig so that it will now have to cope with the whole of the Trident project and the vast quantities of asbestos arising from it? Is it fair that mining communities, which have already had more than their fair share of pneumoconiosis and other problems, should now have to put up with such dangers to their health and that of their families?

Mr. Waldegrave: Whatever is done with asbestos waste, it must be done safely in regard to local communities and any other people in the area. I gather that the PSA's contractor, Shanks and McEwan, was asked on Monday by the sheriff court to have further consultations with the Monklands district council, and it will do so shortly.

Mr. Chapman: Has my hon. Friend had time to consider the implications of and opportunities provided by the new technological process of vitrification of asbestos waste, following the Adjournment debate which I introduced two months ago? Does my hon. Friend appreciate that, if it can be done economically, it will remove the anxieties of hon. Members on each side of the House as well as those of local authorities and communities?

Mr. Waldegrave: The process is indeed relevant to the problem raised by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and is under study.

Mr. Weetch: Is the Minister aware that there is a great deal of disquiet in my constituency about the burial of asbestos waste? Is he aware that 100 tonnes of asbestos waste have been buried by the Central Electricity Generating Board on the site of Cliff Quay power station? Is he satisfied that the regulations governing the burial of such waste are adequate? Will he not hesitate to come before the House and seek to alter the regulations if he has any doubts in his mind arising from evidence from Ipswich or any other part of the country?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sure that any Minister must give that assurance. We have had the recent Doll inquiry into asbestos dangers, and the regulations seem to be satisfactory, but if any serious doubts were brought forward my Department would treat them as a matter or urgency.

Dr. Cunningham: Can the Minister tell the House whether there is any truth in the rumours that several hundred thousand tonnes of asbestos waste are to be dumped in Glenboig? Is it not curious that a contract which was let for the disposal of domestic waste is now apparently turning into one for the major disposal of asbestos from the nuclear submarine programme? Is that not a very unsatisfactory state of affairs?

Why does the Secretary of State not call in this proposal to dump large amounts of asbestos in the way proposed, especially bearing in mind what he said when publishing the report of the hazardous waste inspectorate? The Secretary of State then said that the report

"shows a disturbing situation. It describes a level of performance in both public and private sectors which too frequently falls below acceptable standards."—[*Official Report*, 5 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 166.].

concerned about the environmental implications. If we are to maximise this country's potential wealth and oil reserves there must be drilling, but it must be done in an environmentally acceptable way. The hon. Gentleman has drawn our attention to a way in which it can be done very well, and it is our objective to extend those standards.

Mr. Ward: Is my right hon. Friend aware that drilling for exploratory wells is about to commence in Poole harbour? We accept its necessity and appreciate the co-operation and planning on the part of BP in all its operations both in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Viscount Cranborne) at Wytch farm. If the Wytch farm standards are applied elsewhere, the public interest will be served both from the point of view of recovering oil and of protecting the environment.

Mr. Baker: Again I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I know only too well the pressures placed on Members of Parliament as a result of such developments, but it has been shown that such developments can be carried out in an environmentally acceptable way. I, too, commend the arrangements that BP has made, together with Dorset county council. Indeed, I am glad that this has not become a party political matter, because it is in the interests of the country as a whole.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: When cases go to the Secretary of State on appeal for his consideration, will the Minister ensure that some degree of equivalence is applied to them? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the Secretary of State gives the same consideration to the people of south-east England when they find a few nodding donkeys near their gardens as was given, for example, to applications for opencast coalmining in south Wales, with its consequent ravaging of the environment?

Mr. Baker: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. There are three stages to the development of oil: exploration, appraisal and development. At each of the three stages there has to be a separate licence and a separate planning application. We also insist upon proper restoration and after-care. However, I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's remarks. If we had imposed some concern for restoration and after-care on the industrial development that took place in the 19th century, we would not have so many of the industrial scars that we see today.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: In the context of mineral extraction, if my right hon. Friend has a chance to speak to his right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Energy, will he put it to them that if it is their intention to proceed with turning Solihull into a coalmining community, it must be done with the maximum environmental sensitivity——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the question is about onshore drilling for oil, and his point seems rather wide of that.

Improvement and Repair Grants

4. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he collects information on how many local authorities are currently giving discretionary improvement and repair grants.

6. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities currently have a block on accepting or processing new improvement grant applications; how many of those are in urban areas; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): Responsibility for administering the home improvement grant system rests with local authorities. The Department does not collate information in the form requested on the grant approval practices of individual authorities.

Mr. Fraser: The Minister's answer shows how little interest the Government have in repairs. May I inform the hon. Gentleman that only a handful of local authorities now deal with new applications for improvement and repair grants because of the cuts in housing investment programmes and the freezing of capital receipts? There was a pre-election boom in improvement grants, but there are now thousands of disillusioned people—many of whom are poor—who cannot have any repairs carried out because they cannot obtain help from the local authority. If Environment Ministers are to be more than just the Treasury's errand boys, when will there be a resumption of a reasonable level of repair grants? According to the Minister's own figures, there are 3·5 million unsatisfactory dwellings in this country.

Sir George Young: The local authority is obliged by law to process and award mandatory grants. In Lambeth, discretionary grants are being considered by the local authority. I remind the hon. Gentleman that this year the likely spend on improvement grants will be well in excess of the £90 million spent when he and his Government were last in office.

Mr. Cohen: Is not Waltham Forest, which incidentally is Tory-controlled with Liberal support, one of the increasing number of local authorities putting a block on improvement grants? Does that not mean that many people in Leyton are having the vital means to combat dilapidations cut off? What action will the Government take to restore grants, or will they openly confess that their policy is that good housing is expendable?

Sir George Young: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government make an allocation available to Waltham Forest for housing, and it is up to the authority to decide how much to allocate to improvement grants and how much to other aspects of housing policy. We have made it clear that we hope that it will give priority in improvement grants to those on low incomes, the disabled, and those living in statutory improvement areas. The expenditure on improvement grants in Waltham Forest is likely to be substantially in excess of that six years ago.

Mr. Michael Morris: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a problem in the midlands as well as in London? In the light of the Green Paper, which talks about loans, will my hon. Friend have another look at the basic implementation of improvement grants, and in particular at what the late Anthony Crosland introduced in the late 1960s, because that system worked and people who applied for grants got them?

Sir George Young: As my hon. Friend knows, we have recently issued a Green Paper outlining some new proposals for improvement grants and that will provide the opportunity, which my hon. Friend is seeking, to inject some helpful comments on how we might improve the

system. Until the system is changed, people are entitled to apply under the legislation as it is; and, as I have shown, that is a fairly generous regime.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the deteriorating condition of our housing stock will be adequately tackled through the system proposed in the Green Paper of replacing grants by loans that must be repaid when the owner moves? Will that not simply be a tax on moving and make it even more difficult for the unemployed to get on their bikes?

Sir George Young: An essential component of the Green Paper is the suggestion that the private sector should play a far greater part in restoring the housing stock, together with the owner-occupier. It is not right to expect the public sector to bear the burden of modernising the housing stock. At the end of the day, the responsibility should rest with the owner of the property.

Mrs. Currie: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Green Paper on improvement grants contains much that is immensely worth while, particularly, for example, on the simplification of the designated areas and the definition of what is an unfit property? Therefore, is there any likelihood of early legislation on this important subject?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend will have to await the Queen's Speech to see our legislative proposals, but she is right to draw our attention to the suggestions in the Green Paper. The abolition of the rateable value, for example, will bring entitlement to many more people who are denied it at the moment, and there is a suggestion that there should be more generous compensation for those affected by clearance. There is much in the Green Paper that is worthy of support.

Mr. Hardy: Is the Minister aware that in the Rotherham metropolitan borough more than 600 applicants for improvement grants have been disappointed in recent months, and that that is happening at a time when hundreds of building workers are unemployed? Does the hon. Gentleman accept that Green Papers are no answer to the urgent need for the improvement of Britain's housing stock and the creation of jobs?

Sir George Young: It is up to the hon. Gentleman's local authority to decide how much of its resources to make available for improvement grants. I hope that it will take note of the hon. Gentleman's view that it should give greater priority to this than to other aspects of the programme. As to the Green Paper, if its proposals were followed up there would be better use of public money in that it would be targeted at the people and the buildings that need public sector help.

Asbestos and Toxic Substances

5. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that local communities, community councils and local councils are consulted prior to the dumping of asbestos or toxic substances in their areas.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. William Waldegrave): Deposit of such wastes is already subject to licensing by county councils in England and by district councils in Scotland and Wales. All authorities can be expected to take account of local opinion in their decisions. In England, county councils are obliged by law to consult district councils.

Mr. Clarke: Does the Minister consider it reasonable that his Department should have exploited a licence which was granted to deal with the dumping of domestic asbestos in Glenboig so that it will now have to cope with the whole of the Trident project and the vast quantities of asbestos arising from it? Is it fair that mining communities, which have already had more than their fair share of pneumoconiosis and other problems, should now have to put up with such dangers to their health and that of their families?

Mr. Waldegrave: Whatever is done with asbestos waste, it must be done safely in regard to local communities and any other people in the area. I gather that the PSA's contractor, Shanks and McEwan, was asked on Monday by the sheriff court to have further consultations with the Monklands district council, and it will do so shortly.

Mr. Chapman: Has my hon. Friend had time to consider the implications of and opportunities provided by the new technological process of vitrification of asbestos waste, following the Adjournment debate which I introduced two months ago? Does my hon. Friend appreciate that, if it can be done economically, it will remove the anxieties of hon. Members on each side of the House as well as those of local authorities and communities?

Mr. Waldegrave: The process is indeed relevant to the problem raised by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and is under study.

Mr. Weetch: Is the Minister aware that there is a great deal of disquiet in my constituency about the burial of asbestos waste? Is he aware that 100 tonnes of asbestos waste have been buried by the Central Electricity Generating Board on the site of Cliff Quay power station? Is he satisfied that the regulations governing the burial of such waste are adequate? Will he not hesitate to come before the House and seek to alter the regulations if he has any doubts in his mind arising from evidence from Ipswich or any other part of the country?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sure that any Minister must give that assurance. We have had the recent Doll inquiry into asbestos dangers, and the regulations seem to be satisfactory, but if any serious doubts were brought forward my Department would treat them as a matter or urgency.

Dr. Cunningham: Can the Minister tell the House whether there is any truth in the rumours that several hundred thousand tonnes of asbestos waste are to be dumped in Glenboig? Is it not curious that a contract which was let for the disposal of domestic waste is now apparently turning into one for the major disposal of asbestos from the nuclear submarine programme? Is that not a very unsatisfactory state of affairs?

Why does the Secretary of State not call in this proposal to dump large amounts of asbestos in the way proposed, especially bearing in mind what he said when publishing the report of the hazardous waste inspectorate? The Secretary of State then said that the report

"shows a disturbing situation. It describes a level of performance in both public and private sectors which too frequently falls below acceptable standards."—[*Official Report*, 5 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. *166*.].

Mr. Stanbrook: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not out of order for an hon. Member to make a quotation during Question Time?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question was rather a long one. It is not in order for the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) to read the passage, but he may paraphrase it.

Dr. Cunningham: Has not the Secretary of State's own inspectorate reported that the methods currently employed for the disposal of such wastes are very unsatisfactory? Will he now call in the proposal?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is familiar with the outcome of Monday's hearing. As was shown, the licence is adequate, but the sheriff has asked for further discussion between the contractor and the Monklands district council. My own Department is considering all the options. Understandably, this scale of operations was not envisaged originally, and we must see that the matter is dealt with properly.

System-built Housing

7. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will institute an inquiry into the problems of system-built local authority housing and its implications for future housing investment.

The Minister for Housing and Construction (Mr. Ian Gow): The Building Research Establishment has carried out studies into problems associated with prefabricated reinforced concrete houses designed before 1960 and has published reports. It is now making a study of more recent large panel systems of construction. My Department has written to all local authorities asking them to let us know what work they believe is needed to renovate the houses and flats which they own, including system-built dwellings. When I have the results of this inquiry, I will consider the implications for future housing investment.

Mr. Fatchett: Is it not necessary for the Government to give a clear commitment that they are prepared to make financial resources available to deal with this massive problem? If the Government do not make those resources available, they will condemn many thousands of people to live in housing that is environmentally and socially unfit in many respects. People look to the Government for action. What action will the Minister take?

Mr. Gow: I have already explained to the House that the Building Research Establishment is inquiring into this matter. Sixteen full-time members of the staff at BRE are engaged in the study. I prefer to defer a decision on future investments that will be needed to deal with the problems to which the hon. Gentleman referred until after we have studied the reports from local authorities. I look forward to my meeting, which has been arranged for today week, with the hon. Gentleman and the chairman of Leeds city council housing committee.

Mr. Heddle: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government have already taken action with the implementation of the Housing Defects Act 1984? Does my hon. Friend welcome the agreement which appears to have been reached between the Building Societies Association and the National House Building Council? Building societies are to recommend to their vendors the fact that building societies will now be able to lend mortgages on PRC houses, thereby enabling people whose houses have been blighted to take advantage of the grants under the Housing Defects Act and once again restore a free market to this vital section of the community.

Mr. Gow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that question. He might have reminded the House, although he did not, that the Labour party voted against the Second Reading of the Housing Defects Bill. I welcome the progress that has been made by the NHBC and the building societies to arrive at an acceptable method of repairing defective houses. We do not yet have those acceptable methods of repair, but I hope that they will be in operation before the summer.

Housing Standards

8. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his most recent estimate of the number of homes in the United Kingdom regarded as being below tolerable standards.

Sir George Young: The 1981 "English House Condition Survey" estimated that 1·1 million dwellings in England were unfit for human habitation. An updated estimate will be provided by the next survey to be held in 1986.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the hon. Gentleman accept the point made earlier by the hon. Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris), that only by providing proper improvement grants to private owners will we keep pace with the deterioration in housing stock? Is he aware that people in local government well remember what happened some years ago in the cities when the rate of grant was reduced from 75 to 50 per cent? Suddenly, private owners were unable to carry out the necessary renovations of their houses. Unless proper improvement grants are made available to those people, will we not be faced with having to demolish and rebuild some properties at far greater cost?

Sir George Young: I must question the assumption at the beginning of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question, that it is up to the taxpayer to maintain the condition of privately-owned houses. In the first instance, it must be the responsibility of the owner-occupier to maintain his house in good condition. Where that has failed, there is a case for public sector intervention in certain cases. It would be wrong to imply, as the hon. Gentleman did, that the emphasis on restoring the condition of private housing stock rests with the taxpayer.

Mr. Hirst: Does my hon. Friend agree that the substantial reduction in the number of houses below a tolerable standard north of the border owes a great deal to the success of the Government's policy on housing improvement grants? Does he also agree that, judiciously used, housing improvement grants can do a great deal to improve housing stock and to create employment in the construction sector? Will my hon. Friend and his colleagues press the Treasury to make appropriate resources available for this important grant?

Sir George Young: I hope that my hon. Friend agrees that the Department of the Environment has done well in relation to improvement grants. The figure increased from £90 million to £900 million over six years at a time of

restraint on public expenditure generally. I hope my hon. Friend also agrees that, within public expenditure constraints, we have tried to make improvement grants a priority. I was encouraged to learn of the good results in Scotland. I am sure that the policy over the past five or six years has resulted in large numbers of houses in England being improved.

Mr. Chris Smith: Does the Minister agree that the Government's only response to the problems of deteriorating and defective housing has been to cut local authority investment programmes by more than half in cash terms in the last five years and to prevent local authorities from using their own capital receipts to assist with the problem? Is he aware that that demonstrates yet again the Government's contempt for the badly housed, of whom there are hundreds of thousands?

Sir George Young: I reject that analysis entirely. The policy of the Government has been to engage the resources of the private and public sectors to tackle the housing problems and to generate a large volume of receipts for local authorities from vigorous sales as a result of the right to buy, which was opposed at the time by Labour Members. I repeat that the answer to the problems caused by poor housing conditions does not rest solely on more public money being provided. We must also get the resources of the institutions and owner-occupiers.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend accept, however, that it is far cheaper to improve a house than to knock it down and build another? Is he aware that where clearance has taken place the social problems that have resulted have far outweighed any savings that my hon. Friend thinks there may have been in terms of improvement grants? Will he reconsider the importance of improvement grants, which I believe are good for the community, good for first time house-buyers, good for the country and ensure good value for money?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Sir George Young: If my hon. Friend will re-read the Green Paper——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides want to hear the Minister's reply.

Sir George Young: If my hon. Friend re-reads the Green Paper on improvement grants which we published a few weeks ago he will see that the Government share his desire to maintain the housing stock in good condition. However, we say that it is more important in the future to engage the resources of the private sector as well as those of the public sector so as to make even faster progress than we have so far made. I hope he will agree that the Government's commitment to getting the private institutions—building societies, pension funds and the building industry — to put more into it is wholly consistent with our philosophy and will enable us to make faster progress than we would were we to rely solely on publicly funded improvement grants.

Mr. Cowans: The Minister should be deeply ashamed to stand at the Dispatch Box and announce to the House and, more importantly, to the country, that 1·1 million houses are not in a tolerable condition, especially at a time when he is cutting not only improvement grants but the financial wherewithal to solve the problem. Is it not patently obvious to him, even at this stage, that his policies have failed? Will he go back to the drawing board and re-think the whole issue, not just because of what Labour Members think about his policies, but on behalf of the people who are living in the houses in question? Is he aware that if he does not do that he will be condemning them to living in the sort of intolerable conditions in which he would not be prepared to live? Will he please have a re-think and produce a new solution, knowing that his policies have patently failed?

Sir George Young: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the figure of unfit houses that was revealed in the 1981 survey was lower than the figure shown in the 1976 survey. *[Interruption.]* The 1976 figure showed fewer unfit houses than there were in 1971, and the 1981 figure showed fewer unfit houses than there were in 1976. It is not true to say, therefore, that there are more unfit houses. The answer to the rest of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question is that we have recently outlined some fresh initiatives in relation to home improvements to enable faster progress to be made, and I look forward to seeing his response to our Green Paper.

Rent Acts

9. **Mr. Dobson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to complete his review of the Rent Acts.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Patrick Jenkin): The Government hope to introduce legislation to encourage the supply of more homes for renting in the private sector, but probably not during the lifetime of this Parliament.

Mr. Dobson: In view of newspaper rumours that the Cabinet has decided not to go ahead with the lifting of all rent restrictions, can the Secretary of State confirm that this is because the Prime Minister suddenly realised what the electoral consequences would be for her personally in Finchley if she lifted all rent controls in a constituency where no fewer than 23 per cent. of the households are living in privately rented accommodation, compared with 12 per cent. in the rest of the country?

Mr. Jenkin: I do not think that anyone other than the hon. Gentleman is talking about lifting all rent controls from privately rented property—*[Interruption.]* The fact of the matter is that the Labour party has done all that it can over the years to undermine the private rented sector and is determined to do nothing whatever to help it in the future. A heavy load of responsibility rests upon the Labour party.

Mr. Maples: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are a substantial number of empty dwellings which were previously privately rented, particularly in London, which, if brought back into use, would go a long way towards solving the housing problem, and that the best way of achieving this aim would be to revive the private rented sector?

Mr. Jenkin: I agree with my hon. Friend, but the fact is that to restore the private rented sector so that it can play a proper role in housing the people of this country requires the confidence of landlords. Whatever proposals we introduced before the next general election would

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that expenditure arising from improvement grants is a very cost-effective way of maintaining the quality of our housing stock from the taxpayers' point of view and that it gives rise to a great deal of labour-intensive activity, adding demand to the British economy? In the light of that, does he agree that it is not the most appropriate area in which to seek savings?

Mr. Jenkin: I hope that my hon. Friend will have taken comfort from the most recent figures published by the Department, which suggests that in the first quarter of this year total expenditure on repairs, maintenance and improvement was 10 per cent. up on the previous quarter and 8 per cent. higher than for the comparable period of the previous year. *[Interruption.]* I hope that the Opposition will applaud that, because that is how to get houses repaired and improved. Even more significantly, that increase in total expenditure comes at a time when the peak of expenditure on improvement grants has already passed. I take much comfort from that.

Dr. Cunningham: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the statement on page 1 of the Green Paper that there are 3·5 million unsatisfactory houses is a damning indictment of Government policy in the last half dozen years? Why will the Government not come clean about the proposed changes? There are no figures in the Green Paper relating to compatibility with the social security review, and no figures are given in the social security review either. Does the right hon. Gentleman admit that the Government are trying to disguise the fact that they intend to make major savings in this area in which investment is desperately needed? Will he also publish figures, as the Secretary for Wales has recently done, giving an analysis of renovation grants? Is he aware that the analysis shows that the system is working quite well in Wales, in that the average household income for recipients of grant is just over £5,000 and 72 per cent. of those who received grants had savings of less than £1,000, so people on low incomes are clearly benefiting from the system?

Mr. Jenkin: We intend to publish the full results of the English distribution of grant inquiry in the autumn. Annex 1 to the Green Paper sets out the main findings in some detail, but I can give the hon. Gentleman an undertaking that the full figures will follow later.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The Green Paper rightly includes an annex about improvements and adaptations for the disabled. Does the Secretary of State intend that that should also cover improvements and adaptations for the elderly? Is he aware of the splendid "Staying Put" scheme sponsored by the Anchor housing association, and will he encourage the provision of loans for work of that kind?

Mr. Jenkin: I am well aware of the excellent work of the Anchor housing association through that scheme. I hope that the proposals in the Green Paper can be used to reinforce that work. I must, however, put it firmly to the House that it makes no sense for the taxpayer to have to put his hand in his pocket—we are always being told that people pay tax at far too low a level of income—to finance work on other people's houses when those other people could well afford to do the work themselves. We shall help those who need help, but not those who can afford to do the work themselves.

Water Supplies (Nitrate Content)

14. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has now come to a decision on the applications from water authorities for exemption from the regulations limiting the nitrate content of public water supplies.

Mr. Gow: The Council of European Communities' Ministers has laid down, with effect from the 15 July, a maximum concentration of 50 mg of nitrate per litre of water. Under article 9 the directive allows for derogations to be made and I have received 49 applications for derogation. I will announce my decision shortly.

Mr. Taylor: Will the Minister accept my sincere congratulations on having so far resisted the enormous pressure on him and the Secretary of State to approve derogation,s which would be an environmental disaster and a potentially serious health hazard? Does he agree that it would be unthinkable for the Government to agree even to a temporary derogation, against the clear views of the World Health Organisation, without steps being taken to reduce the appalling use of nitrate fertilisers on farm land, which merely pollutes public water supplies?

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend will know that the advice of the World Health Organisation does not accord with that which we have received in the report of the joint committee on medical aspects of water quality, which was published in April last year. Nevertheless, as my hon. Friend knows as well as any hon. Member, this is an extremely serious matter. I would want to give it more careful consideration. I shall meet our principal medical advisers before I come to a decision.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: Why should we allow farmers to continue to use large quantities of nitrogen fertilisers which pollute our water supplies, endanger health and threaten wildlife, merely to produce large quantities of unwanted food, which must be stored at great expense to the taxpayer? We would not allow manufacturing industry to get away with that, would we? Would it not be more sensible for the hon. Gentleman to put pressure on the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to stop farmers from using excessive quantities of nitrogen?

Mr. Gow: The House will know that, under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, a water authority can prosecute in appropriate cases when there has been pollution of a water supply. I remind the hon. Gentleman that, following discussions between my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and me, a code of good agricultural practice, which deals with nitrates among other things, was issued in January. I hope that farmers will follow that advice. In conjunction with my right hon. Friend, I shall continue to monitor the situation.

Viscount Cranborne: My hon. Friend has told the House how important this matter is. Can he therefore explain why the Government are cutting the subsidy for research at the Freshwater Biological Association, which is in my constituency, when such an important part of its research is concerned with the effects of nitrates on water supply?

Mr. Gow: Although there might be some reductions in my noble Friend's constituency, there is an increase in other research, notably at the universities.

House Building (North-West Region)

15. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the house building programme in the north-west region.

Sir George Young: About 20,050 dwellings were completed in the north-west region in 1984, compared with 18,250 in 1983 and 17,450 in 1982.

Mr. Lewis: Is the Minister aware that those figures are pathetic when set against the need for housing in the north-west region? When the Secretary of State visits the north-west next week, and especially when he visits the city of Salford, will he please listen intently to the representations that will be made by that authority about the devastating effect on its housing programme of the severe cuts in housing investment programme money during the past six years?

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend is looking forward to his visit to the north-west in a few days' time. He will, of course, listen attentively to representations made by local councillors about the gravity of the housing situation there. I hope the hon. Gentleman agrees that the figures that I gave show a welcome increase in the number of completions in the north-west region.

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend agree that, although it is important to consider the house building programme in the north-west, the building programme in the south-east is equally important? A planning application in the south-east region had a public inquiry two and a half years ago, and one single inspector has yet to make up his mind one way or the other.

Local Authorities (Services)

16. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will carry out a survey of all local authorities to establish the changes in support for: home helps, nursery education, capitation, revenue support, mentally handicapped, the elderly, concessionary fares, adaptations under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, community facilities, industrial promotion and repairs and maintenance to local authority property.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have no plans to extend the surveys already undertaken by my Department to collect information on local authority expenditure on these services.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If a genuine survey were conducted, would it not reveal that support for home helps, nursery education, capitation, revenue support, mentally handicapped—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] Yes, it is a long list—the elderly, concessionary fares, adaptations for the chronically sick and disabled, community facilities, industrial promotion budgets, repairs and maintenance to local authority properties—for everything affecting local authority programmes—has been cut to shreds? Why should Labour-controlled authorities, which were elected with a mandate to retain services, feel compelled to implement cuts imposed on them by the Government which offend the spirit of their manifestos?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman claims that there have been cuts in social provision in his area. By 1983-84, there were 10 per cent. more home helps than there were four years previously and 3 per cent. more nursery pupils, over the same period. Expenditure on concessionary fares increased by 90 per cent. over the same period. In the area covered by his district council, concessionary fares have increased by 89 per cent. Nursery school expenditure in Cumbria increased by 38 per cent. and home help expenditure increased by 69 per cent. I hope that he will personally thank the Prime Minister for the increase in social provision in his area.

Division (Member's Name)

3.30 pm

Mr. Speaker: Last night, after the 10 o'clock Division, the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) complained that, after having passed through the Aye Lobby, he found that the Tellers had already left. Mr. Deputy Speaker undertook to inquire into the matter. Inquiries have shown that the hon. Gentleman was in no way to blame. Accordingly, I direct that his name should be added to those recorded as voting in the Aye Lobby and that the total number should be corrected.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): I am deeply grateful for what you have said, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry for any trouble that I may have caused to anyone.

Pensioners' Heating and Communications

3.32 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to guarantee supplies of gas and electricity to pensioners and to abolish standing charges for pensioners for gas and electricity and to abolish telephone rentals.

Last winter was an especially cold and unpleasant one and many people used extra heating during the winter to maintain some degree of comfort in their homes. I am sure that Members of this place did so, along with many pensioers throughout the country. Those hon. Members who did so will have no problem in paying last winter's gas and electricity bills, but many pensioners have been in some fear ever since the end of the winter, as they do not know how they will be able to pay their bills. The bills will be especially high because the winter was particularly severe.

It is important that we discuss the effects of the high costs of heating and cooking on pensioners and try to do something to alleviate them. Many statistics are available, but one that stands out a mile is that the deaths of the elderly are greater by 22 per cent. during the winter months than they are in the summer months. This is because the elderly cannot cope with the cold. Unfortunately, because of the high costs, many of them do not heat their homes to the level that they should. Many suffer from hypothermia and tragically many die as a result. The House should consider this matter seriously.

The number of pensioners whose gas or electricity supply is cut off as a result of inability to pay the bill is considerable. During December 1983 to December 1984, there were 92,825 electricity cut-offs. The most recent estimate suggests that about 4·5 per cent. of that number were pensioner households, which means that over 4,000 pensioners had their electricity supply cut off during that period.

The electricity and gas boards both claim that the number of cut-offs has reduced since the introduction of direct payment schemes, whereby pensioners and other poor people have their gas and electricity bills paid direct. That may be a satisfactory way for the boards to collect their money and to make the enormous profits that they now enjoy, but it results in a squeeze on the household budgets of pensioners and others who are the poorest in our society. This means that they lose out in other directions. For example, they may not eat properly and they may be unable to go out or do anything else to support their standard of living.

The aim of the Bill is, first, to guarantee supplies of gas and electricity for pensioners so that they cannot be cut off in any circumstances. That aim is based on society recognising that pensioners hold a special place in society and have special needs and that cutting off their gas or electricity is dangerous and could lead to their death.

I also suggest that we go some way towards alleviating pensioners' hardship by abolishing standing charges for them. The system of standing charges has been in operation for some years. It was supported by a report from the Price Commission on gas prices in 1979 and 1980 which claimed:

"The economic rationale for a separate standing charge for domestic credit customers is that it ensures that prices charged are more closely related to costs than would be the case if a single rate per therm were charged at all levels of usage. The supply of gas involves fixed costs per customer unrelated to the volume supplied."

I object to the fact that the report says that the introduction of standing charges would protect the largest consumers of gas and electricity, whereas I believe that we should be protecting the smallest consumers. The standing charge system means that the smallest consumers pay the most for gas and electricity. Because of that, a rebate system was introduced which meant that no consumer would pay more than half the bill in standing charges.

The problem with the rebate system is that it has not necessarily exclusively benefited pensioners. A report from the South of Scotland electricity board, and a number of others, shows that the main beneficiaries of the rebate scheme have not been pensioners but have been the owners of second homes which are the cause of great anxiety in Wales, Scotland and some parts of England.

Although the boards concede that the standing charge falls unfairly on the smallest consumers, they are now trying to withdraw it on the grounds that the only people who have benefited to any great extent are the owners of second homes. The boards are deliberately and callously ignoring the plight of pensioners and other small consumers who have to pay far more because of the standing charge system.

My Bill therefore proposes to end the rebate system and abolish standing charges for pensioners only so that the owners of second homes, who can well afford to heat their first home and probably their second home, do not benefit on the backs of pensioners and the good campaigning that the pensioners' organisations have done over the years.

The cost of standing charges varies, but added to the standing charges for gas and electricity and the telephone rental, they can easily amount to between £20 and £40 per quarter for a pensioner household. That is a scandalous amount and a major attack on living standards.

It is important that if the Bill is passed into law, as I hope it will be, hon. Members realise that I am not proposing to abolish standing charges for pensioners merely to increase the unit costs of gas, electricity and telephones for every other consumer—that would also obviously affect pensioner households—but that the Government should use public funds to ensure that there is no further increase in those prices for anyone because of the abolition of standing charges for pensioners.

Any examination of the financial results of both fuel boards in the past year would show that they could well afford to do that. In the year 1983-84, the Electricity Council returned a profit of £623 million, the British Gas Corporation returned a profit of £668 million and, over the past six months alone, British Telecom returned a profit of £684 million.

According to the Government's figures the cost of abolishing standing charges for gas and electricity would be only £300 million in one year. The British Gas Corporation levy last year was £522 million. The Government could well afford to abolish standing charges, and it would be a major benefit to pensioners.

I do not believe that the Bill would end the horror and poverty that many pensioner households face day in, day out, and the fear that many of them have about heating their homes adequately or even cooking a hot meal on a cold evening because they cannot afford the bill. However, it would go some way towards alleviating that poverty.

It is amazing that, in a few moments, the Secretary of State for Defence will be telling us of the bottomless pit that defence expenditure has become. The cost of just one quarter of the Trident programme will be £2·5 billion. The cost of abolishing standing charges for pensioners could be paid for by not proceeding with the ludicrous proposal to build a major international airport at Port Stanley. There are hundreds of other examples in the defence Estimates that could be used to pay the cost of my Bill.

It is unlikely that any hon. Member will rise and oppose the Bill. In some ways, I should be glad if hon. Members opposed it, because at least we would hear their arguments for charging pensioners and poor people more than wealthy people for gas and electricity.

Many pensioners' groups throughout the country have written to me enclosing copies of letters received from their own Members of Parliament who say how much they support the abolition of standing charges for gas and electricity for pensioners and the abolition of telephone rentals. Some of those letters come from surprising quarters. I shall not detain the House by reading out the names of the hon. Members involved, but when I have completed my researches I shall publish all the names and I think that we shall find that they make up a majority of the House. The nearer we get to the general election, the larger the majority will be.

I am sure that you will be glad, Mr. Speaker, to give me the opportunity to read out those names and to prove that there is a majority — albeit many of the hon. Members in that majority are practicing self-imposed silence — for the abolition of standing charges for gas and electricity for pensioners.

I hope that the House will take the problem seriously and will support the Bill to end the fear that many old people face as they try to meet last winter's bill and their trepidation about their inability to keep themselves warm or adequately fed next winter.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Tony Benn, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Bob Clay, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Miss Joan Maynard, Ms. Clare Short, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Robert N. Wareing and Mr. David Winnick.

Pensioners' Heating and Communications

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn accordingly presented a Bill to guarantee supplies of gas and electricity to pensioners and to abolish standing charges for pensioners for gas and electricity and to abolish telephone rentals: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 5 July and to be printed. [Bill 157.]

Defence

First Day's Debate

3.42 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I beg to move,

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985, contained in Cmnd. 9430.

Mr. Speaker: I announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

In view of the number of right hon. and hon. Members who wish to take part in this important debate, I intend to impose the 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock. However, I hope that those who are called before 7 o'clock will also bear the limit in mind.

Mr. Heseltine: The White Paper provides both the background to Government policy and the essential facts which underlie it.

The House will be grateful to the defence Select Committee for its first and third reports, which have been published this week. The House will understand if I do not address today the issues raised in the first report on merchant shipping. It would be premature to do so, and the Committee itself has made it clear that it accepts this view.

On the third report, I welcome the Committee's comments on the presentation of the White Paper and I will ensure that they are passed on to those responsible within my Department.

I shall attempt today to address some of the issues raised by the Committee. In particular, I shall address two of its main themes: the absence of any major change in policy in the White Paper and whether in the long term we can sustain our present commitments within the sums of money likely to be available.

This year has seen a major reorganisation of the Ministry, which came into effect on 2 January. It is, I think, well established that we have concentrated on the output we get from the rising defence budget and on the enhanced value to be derived from a policy of increased competition. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will be commenting in detail tomorrow on this aspect of our work.

In this year's White Paper, while continuing the emphasis on value for money questions, we have also sought to look in depth at defence policy. Chapter 2 of the White Paper addresses the United Kingdom's role within NATO, the Alliance's defence posture, including the application of new and emerging technology, and Britain's interest and responsibilities outside the NATO area. In chapter 3, we look at the European contribution to the Alliance and how the Europeans might strengthen their co-operation with one another. The White Paper includes an essay on NATO's strategy of flexible response and alternatives to it.

That is a formidable weight of material. It points to the considerable success of these policies. I would argue that that success is the best case for stability. If it is not necessary to change, why should we contemplate it? The Defence Committee acknowledges the consistency of policy but seems to be searching for a longer-term political and strategic prospect. It seems to be arguing for a review

[Mr. Heseltine]

of policy priorities. I would not wish to appear complacent, but we should not indulge in a destabilising process of review unless the case for such a review is proved. To imply that change is needed, without suggesting the direction that it should take, carries with it the risk that confidence will be jeopardised because those in positions of responsibility lack belief in their own policies.

The starting point, therefore, for addressing the case for a new approach to strategy must be to address the adequacy or otherwise of NATO's present strategy of forward defence and flexible response. Has it served us well? Does it remain relevant to today's strategic circumstances? It is likely to be invalidated by developments we can already see, not just in technologies, but much more important, in political relationships?

It is the direct consequence of the strength and cohesion of the North Atlantic Alliance that Europe enjoys continuing peace and prosperity today and in such marked contrast to the circumstances of 40 years ago, which we are remembering this year. In those 40 years there have been enormous changes in the economic circumstances of Europe, but the underlying strategic realities, which developed in the immediate aftermath of the war, remain the same. In western Europe we must face the weight of Soviet military power, and the reality of a country which has been prepared to use that power in support of its political influence over the territory of others. We must deal with a country which combines the long-standing Russian obsession with secure borders with a much more modern mission to bring the world to communism, which is over-armed beyond the point of any rational assessment of its defence needs, and which has shown in the 1950s and 1960s in eastern Europe and in the 1970s and 1980s in Afghanistan a willingness to use those arms.

The clear lesson of the last 40 years is that the Soviet Union is prepared to extend its influence worldwide when low risk opportunities present themselves. It is not prepared to do so in every case. The Soviet leadership is cautious and careful. The risks will be carefully weighed. The essence of NATO strategy has been to ensure that there were no risk-free opportunities of aggression against a member of the North Atlantic Alliance. Its success then and now rests upon the Russians being in no doubt about both our ability and our will to defend ourselves and our allies.

I do not wish to exaggerate the Soviet military threat, but neither should we see it as less than it is. In this year's White Paper we have expanded the analysis of the balance and included the necessary caveats about the comparisons we make. The underlying military reality remains as daunting as ever: in conventional forces, in chemical weapons—about which the defence committee expresses its concern — and in the Soviet Union's huge and growing nuclear arsenal. There are chilling comparisons there for all to see. The White Paper sets out the facts very carefully. There has been no shift in Soviet policy except in its intensification.

The task then remains as it has done over the past three and a half decades: to maintain a credible deterrent within a coherent alliance. A wholly European alliance today could not provide an effective deterrent. What, then, are the prospects for sustaining the present uniquely successful alliance between the north American and the European peoples? There are, of course, those who suggest that the United States may turn its back on Europe as the balance of population and of interest in America increasingly turns to the Pacific. There is nothing new in this argument—it is not even just a post-war argument—but it ignores the huge American political and economic interest in Europe, as well as the closest historical and cultural ties.

Provided that we in Europe are prepared to sustain our commitment and contribution, we believe that a transatlantic partnership is the logical outcome of enlightened self-interest. The decisions taken by NATO defence Ministers in December about infrastructure and stock levels, and in May about the follow-up on conventional defence improvements are important, demonstrating the support for the Alliance not only of Britain but of the rest of the European allies.

Our commitment to the Alliance is not simply a matter of money, or of conventional effort. Every member of the Alliance enjoys the benefits of the peace provided by the mix of forces underpinning NATO's present strategy. The nuclear element of that mix has to be sustained and modernised, no less than the conventional element. Only the most catastrophic consequences will follow if individual countries pick and choose between those elements of our strategy that they are prepared to sustain, those risks that they are prepared to share and those that they would prefer to leave to others. Of course, no one can prevent them from pursuing such a policy, because each of us is a sovereign nation, but the process of opting out and leaving others to take up the strain, and to carry a higher share of the responsibility, is a policy calculated to whet the appetite of a Soviet Union watching for the weak link and the risk-free opportunity.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Alliance and all its partners have been determined to modernise and to continue to improve their nuclear capability and that it is that which has brought the Soviet Union, at long last, to meaningful negotiations to try to achieve arms control?

Mr. Heseltine: To all except the most narrow-minded, that is self-evident and I shall return to that point later.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is Ascension Island being used as a target area for cruise and MX missiles?

Mr. Heseltine: When I referred to all except the most narrow-minded, I had not realised how quickly that would be demonstrated.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Secretary of State answer the question?

Mr. Heseltine: That is——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I am not giving way to the hon. Gentleman. That is why the policies put forward by——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the Secretary of State is not giving way.

Mr. Heseltine: That is why the policies put forward by Labour Members represent just such a recipe for undermining the cohesion of the North Atlantic Alliance. Labour's policy of removing all American nuclear bases and weapons and of abandoning Britain's independent

deterrent, and its search for a continentwide European nuclear-free zone would leave this country and Europe defenceless against nuclear blackmail; defenceless, that is, unless we are to look to the United States to protect us from the huge Soviet nuclear threat while we sit smugly in some cosy haven of moral superiority. The truth is that the abandonment by Britain of the basis of our defence policies since the war would be such a dramatic shock to the Alliance as to call the whole enterprise into question — which is, of course, exactly what a significant number of Opposition Members would like to achieve.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman knows full well that paragraph 105 of the Defence Estimates says of the Soviet Union:

"The roots of Soviet policy are complex. The Soviet Union . . . is a country obsessed with its own security".

If the Government accept that the Soviet Union is obsessed, as I believe it is, with its own security, is it not clear that its policies — I do not accept its internal system—towards the border countries and Afghanistan have resulted from its concern for its security? Will the right hon. Gentleman address himself not to some narrow issue but to the wider question of why the Soviet Union has arrived at its policy?

Mr. Heseltine: The House should listen carefully to the hon. Gentleman, because he is right. Every advance that the Soviet Union makes has been based upon an assertion of its own insecurity. However, the consequence for those into whose country the Soviets advance has been suppression by the Red Army. The logic of the hon. Gentleman's argument is that we should always withdraw, step by step, to leave a vacuum so that the Soviet Union can fill it. That is an intolerable assessment for any hon. Member.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): Does my right hon. Friend recall the strategy employed in the 1930s by the Hitler regime, and the domino effect of picking off one weak nation after another, which inevitably led to the 1939-45 conflict? Is that not similar in many ways to the strategy being employed by the Soviet Union, which is trying to pick off weak nations to advance its own ideology, both political and military, in the 1970s, the 1980s and, possibly, the 1990s?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is right, and it is precisely because the Labour Government of the 1940s saw clearly the dangers of repeating what happened in the 1930s that they helped to invite the Americans to join the NATO Alliance. They were right to do so.

I have no apologies for offering no new policies, and for not seeking to change the strategy that had served us well. I advocate continuity because the policies have brought success. This is not an argument for complacency. Our security policy rests not only upon the military forces necessary for a deterrent, which must be kept up to date, but on achieving agreements with the Soviet Union that would enable both sides to enjoy security with lower levels of armaments. These are not two separate aims; they are inextricably linked. The Soviet Union will not negotiate seriously if it believes that its interests can be achieved by other means. We saw between 1979 and 1983 a sustained propaganda campaign over the potential deployment of intermediate range nuclear forces. Before that, the Soviet Union had already deployed its SS20 intermediate nuclear threat, but when it did that, there was little protest on the streets of this country.

When we gave notice that we had to maintain the NATO deterrent, we were told by the Labour party, and by the protest groups so closely associated with it, that the Government's determination, and that of its Allies, to introduce Pershing II and cruise missiles, had destroyed the prospect of arms control. We were told that, if we proceeded with the modernisation of our intermediate range weapon systems, the Russians would walk out, and that the peace of Europe would be threatened.

However, the truth is that today the Soviet Union is back at the conference table, not because the West indulged in any one-sided gestures but because the Soviets realised that we had the will to go through with the necessary modernisation of our forces in the absence of arms control agreement. That is particularly because the one-sided disarmers had lost the democratic debate in the West. Once again, our policies worked, and the forecasts of the Left were revealed for the simple media fodder they really were.

The White Paper sets out the British Government's efforts in support of arms control. We must prevent the erosion of existing arms control agreements on strategic nuclear missiles and on anti-ballistic missile systems. We shall in that context strive for new agreements in Geneva.

If nations were to adopt the view that arms treaties and agreements are short-term pauses between technological breakthroughs of different weapon generations, then the arms control process would simply come to a halt. America has proved, in the SALT II context, that she has a wider vision. I believe that the whole House will wish to commend the announcement by President Reagan that the United States will continue to observe the SALT II constraints. It is a vivid demonstration of the seriousness with which the United States approaches arms control. We look to the Soviet Union to show an equally scrupulous attitude to its obligations and to negotiate seriously at Geneva towards real reductions in nuclear arsenals.

Our approach to the strategic defence initiative was set out in the four points agreed between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States at Camp David, and which were reaffirmed in February this year. The British Government support the need for research under that initiative, which is only prudent in the light of long-standing Soviet research in similar fields. We are at present discussing with the United States Administration British participation in the research. Such participation must bring clear benefits for our own defence effort and certainly must not represent a one-way traffic in expertise and technology. I agree with the Defence Committee that those issues need urgent consideration, which they are receiving—and that we should work closely with our European allies on them. We intend shortly to define the way forward.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): One of the arguments in favour of our participation is a transfer of technology. Why should the United States expect to share the fruits of research and development in this area when it was so reluctant, in other areas such as the gas pipeline, to share technology with West European nations?

Mr. Heseltine: As I think the gist of the Select Committee report — I fully accept it — is that no

[Mr. Heseltine]

European country, and certainly not the United Kingdom, will negotiate with the United States on the basis of one-way traffic in technoloy in this context, the answer to the hon. Member's question is clear. That thought will be at the forefront of the consideration that we as Ministers bring to the issue. It is already very much on the table in the dialogue between the United Kingdom and the United States. I have no doubt whatever that exactly the same thoughts will occur to our European allies.

Returning to the strategic defence initiative, the more fundamental issue of whether such systems should be deployed, although they are now being widely debated, is a deciso for the future. It raises the profoundest strategic as well as technical issues. The United States Administration have set out the criteria which would need to be met in judging the feasibility of new technologies which may emerge from SDI research. They recognise that the defensive systems would have to be survivable in order not themselves to become tempting targets for attack They recognise that they must be cost effective at the margin, so that they are not simply countered by the other side adding offensive capability necessary to overcome the defence. Those are in themselves demanding criteria.

Above all, as the Select Committee recognises, the question which has to be addressed is the circumstances in which the deployment of SDI defences would enhance deterrence. What measures would be needed in other areas, particularly to rectify the conventional imbalance, in order to achieve this, and would they be in fact and in practice negotiable? The British Government's interest in those issues relates to the wider strategic questions which are at the heart of the alliance strategy.

As a nuclear power we have, of course, a particular interest and expertise, but that is not the driving force of our concern. I particularly welcome the Defence Committee's recognition that a new era of strategic defences would be unlikely to arrive while Trident is in service. The case for Trident is set out in the White Paper and I do not intend to expand on it today. I repeat that which perhaps needs no repetition — that the Government's commitment could not be more certain. We intend to take the steps necessary to maintain Britain's independent deterrent.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I have been looking through the White Paper and trying to find the costs which are allowed for in the Trident programme for the communications system between the sea-based submarines, which could be up to 6,000 miles away, and the politicians, to ensure that there is effective control. I realise that that is an extremely expensive system. It does not appear to be in the accounts in the White Paper.

Mr. Heseltine: I assure the hon. Gentleman that neither the Labour Government that presumably he would have supported in an earlier generation nor this Government would be so inept as to have inadequate communication systems on such a critical aspect of our defence capability. That Labour Members should laugh at such a statement merely reflects their naivety, because the Opposition have consistently supported the concept that Britain should have a Polaris independent nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: If there is some specific breakdown of costs about which I can help the hon. Gentleman, I shall try to do so, but I assure him that the communication systems between our submarines and the Government will be impeccable.

I have concentrated so far on the problems of East-West relations and on our contribution to NATO. The Alliance is the foundation of our security, and about 95 per cent. of our defence budget is devoted, directly or indirectly, to alliance tasks. But neither we nor our allies can shut our eyes to the world beyond the NATO area. We still have some residual direct security responsibilities for the remaining dependent territories. We therefore retain garrisons in such diverse locations as Hong Kong, Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands. Our determination to continue to fulfil those responsibilities could not be more clearly illustrated than by the new Mount Pleasant airport in the Falklands, recently opened by His Royal Highness Prince Andrew.

The construction of the airport—a truly astonishing civil engineering feat—will enable us to reinforce the islands rapidly in the event of a crisis, to achieve savings in the cost of the garrison, and play an important role in the economic and social development of the Falklands. But our interests outside NATO are not restricted to those direct responsibilities. We must be prepared to bear our share of responsibility for protecting trade routes and for promoting peace and stability in those areas where local conflicts could spread and risk wider East-West confrontation.

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): As my right hon. Friend is talking in the context of our naval forces, he may well be aware of recent press speculation about the future of two types of vessel, known as OPV2 and OPV3. Those vessels were perhaps of some interest to a shipyard in my constituency, Hall Russell, which was hoping to bid for them. As there is considerable uncertainty about them, can my right hon. Friend say whether there is provision for either vessel in his programme, and specifically whether it is the case that, if there is no such provision, they have been deleted at the instance of the Royal Navy or for some other reason?

Mr. Heseltine: No, that offshore patrol vessel is a subject that the Royal Navy is exploring. It has been having conversations with industry. It may or may not wish to make a bid for the cash to pay for it. At the moment, no such cash provision has been made available. In any case, the appraisal of such a project would have to go through the central evaluation processes of the Ministry of Defence. That has not happened, and there is no way in which I have approved that the programme shall proceed. But it is perfectly healthy and reasonable that individual parts of the Ministry of Defence should have dialogue with industry about what possibilities may exist.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I think it is more a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. It is not a project in our main programme, and I do not think we want to be diverted into the minutiae of possibilities which are a considerable way from my decision-making process. If it is convenient to the House, we shall follow up that matter in the debate tomorrow.

We must be prepared to bear our share of responsibility for protecting trade routes and promoting peace and stability in those areas where local conflicts could spread and risk wider East-West confrontation.

The White Paper describes the various ways in which we contribute to these objectives — for example, our world wide network of defence facilities, our military assistance programmes and our contributions to peace-keeping forces. Ultimately, we maintain a capability to intervene militarily, either to protect our own interests or in response to a request for help from our friends. Drawing on the lessons of the Falklands conflict, we have made great strides in enhancing the mobility and flexibility of our forces to deploy rapidly at long range in a crisis. The use of such forces would be regarded very much as a last resort, but if they are to be effective in any crisis, they must be not only properly equipped but well trained.

We plan, therefore, to conduct a major strategic mobility exercise next year to demonstrate the ability of our forces to respond rapidly to a crisis outside the NATO area and to test the improvements we have made in our command and control arrangements.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The right hon. Gentleman has mentioned the savings that will be made by building the Mount Pleasant airport and the costs involved in maintaining the Falkland Islands. How many years will it take to recoup the enormous cost of building the airport?

Mr. Heseltine: I do not think that I can give that answer, because this is a military commitment which is essential to the original commitment to free the islands. Once the Labour party joined the Government in supporting the decision to send the task force, there was a defence commitment. Anyone with responsibility cannot now renege on that commitment. It is therefore part of our defence determination that we should have this defence facility. It will enable us to do the job much more rapidly and at a lower cost. The hon. Gentleman tries to have it both ways in suggesting that there is a practical alternative. The criticism, if there is one, is that Governments of both parties did not provide an effective airport in the Falklands many years ago.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): While on the subject of mobility and the lessons of the Falklands conflict, does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the lessons learned from the Falklands war was the great importance of the helicopter on the battlefield? Is it not amazing that the appropriate military departments within the Ministry are taking another nine months to assess air staff target 404, which can readily be filled by the W30 helicopters that are manufactured in and around my constituency?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend's concern for Britain's defence interests is well known. Perhaps he will forgive me if, in the present circumstances, I do not become too deeply drawn into those matters. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman understands the sensitivity of this issue. The Army is reviewing the requirements. It must be my responsibility as Secretary of State for Defence to be sure that the Army is satisfied before I take any decisions. I am not trying to impose a political judgment upon the military requirements in these circumstances.

I turn now to the scale of the defence programme. In 1985-86, the defence budget will be about £18 billion— an increase of more than £1 billion in cash terms over 1984-85. By the end of this financial year, we shall have completed an unprecedented period of seven years of consecutive real growth in the defence budget. British defence expenditure is the highest in total and per capita of the major European members of the Alliance. The proportion of the budget spent on equipment is the highest of any NATO country. I cannot help wondering sometimes, as I read the critics of our defence policy, just how uneasy they might feel if they lived in one of our neighbouring Alliance countries, facing much the same threat but having so much smaller a defence budget with which to counter it.

But what are we getting for the money we spend on defence? Chapter 4 of the White Paper sets out in detail the equipment that is coming into service or being developed for the armed forces. Let me pick out some of the highlights.

For the Army, the re-equipping of armoured regiments with the Challenger tank continues. I am able to announce today that an order for further Challenger tanks is being placed with Royal Ordnance plc, to equip a sixth Challenger regiment. The infantry's mobility and protection will be improved by the introduction of the MCV80 and Saxon armoured personnel carriers, and it is already being issued with the new SA80 small arm.

The artillery supporting these troops will receive the multiple launch rocket system. In the same time frame, we will be replacing the ageing 105 mm Abbot with the collaborative 155 mm SP70 self-propelled gun. The artillery's target acquisition will be improved with the Phoenix remotely piloted aerial reconnaissance vehicle, and the battlefield artillery target engagement system will enable us to employ our artillery resources to the best possible effect. In air defence, Rapier is being improved and work is going well on the new short-range high-velocity missile to complement Javelin.

Finally, we will get the best possible value from all these weapons through the introduction from this year of Ptarmigan, a secure field trunk communications system unmatched anywhere in the world, and Wavell, our first major venture in computer-assisted command and control.

The majority of the RAF's front line assets are being replaced with new aircraft and new weapons. Nine Tornado GR1 squadrons have now formed and will eventually build up to 11 squadrons. The Tornado GR1's armoury will include the JP233 cratering and area denial weapon, deliveries of which will begin later this year, and the ALARM defence suppression weapon, planned to enter service in two years. Deliveries of Tornado F2, the air defence variant, have begun and the operational conversion unit was formed on 1 May this year. The number of air defence squadrons in the United Kingdom will be increased from seven to nine. In the ground support role, the Harrier GR5 will replace the Harrier GR3 and will be armed with an improved version of the BL755 anti-armour weapon, which will enter service with the GR3 this year.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): My right hon. Friend did not mention a replacement for the Jaguar. The House will be very much aware of the ministerial meeting to be held on 18 June in this city on the European fighter aircraft. Will my hon. Friend assure the House that, in those important ministerial discussions, he will ensure

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

that the RAF's key operational requirement and the industrial considerations which are so crucial to this country are met?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Perhaps he will allow me to come to that point a little later.

Since entering office in 1979, we have ordered 45 ships for the Royal Navy. In the last year and a half, we have ordered or set in hand procurement action for five completely new classes. The first class of the type 23 frigate and the type 2400 conventional submarine are on order. We have invited or received tenders for the single-role minehunter, the auxillary oiler replenishment vessel and the Trident ballistic missile submarine.

The highlight of the next few years will be the entry into service of the type 23 frigate with Harpoon, vertically launched Sea Wolf, Sonar 2050 and the EH101 helicopter — all advanced equipment of the highest quality and capability.

I note the concern expressed by the Defence Committee on the ordering rate of destroyers and frigates. Our commitment remains to a force level of about 50 in the longer term. We intend to sustain an ordering rate of broadly three new frigates a year from the first follow-on type 23s. Since 1979 we have spent over £2 billion more in real terms on the conventional Navy — excluding Falklands replacements — than if spending had been maintained at the 1978-79 level.

Important though our equipment plans are, the capability of our forces rests equally upon the quality and motivation of those in the armed forces and of the civilians who work alongside them. I will certainly ensure, as the Select Committee has requested, that more is said about this area in next year's White Paper.

It may be helpful if I say a word about recruitment and retention in the armed forces.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): What decision has my right hon. Friend reached about the replacement of the existing specialised ships for 3 Commando Brigade, Royal Marines? If we are to reinforce the northern flank in war, it is important to be able to get there.

Mr. Heseltine: I shall be coming to that subject later.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I hope that hon. Members will agree that I have given way sufficiently. I have much more to say, and I wish to make progress.

I come now to recruitment and retention in the armed forces. Volume 2 of the White Paper shows that, between April 1979 and January 1985, the strengths of trained United Kingdom regular forces increased from about 284,000 to about 297,000. The figures do not support the more extreme reports of increasing overstretch that have appeared in the press. Recruitment is generally good, except in some technical areas where there is fierce competition from the civilian sector.

Outflow from the armed forces is certainly increasing as the economy picks up. *[Interruption.]* If opposition Members do not understand that in large parts of British industry there is now a significant scarcity of skilled and trained people, they have no idea of the rate of change in the industrialisation of the western world.

Although there has been an increase in the outflow as the pressure from industry increases, the figures must be seen in perspective. The outflow in the last financial year, at about 34,500, is up on the previous year, but it is also about 15,000, or 30 per cent., lower than the figure in 1978-79, before we came to office.

The Government are committed to maintaining the remuneration of the armed forces at a level sufficient to meet the requirements for trained manpower arising from our defence policy. The announcement by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister last week of the Government's response to the 1985 armed forces pay review body report showed in the clearest and most tangible way the considerable commitment that we have made and have maintained.

We attach equal importance to the strength of our volunteer reserve forces. The Territorial Army currently stands at 73,500, compared with 59,000 six years ago, and the planned expansion to 86,000 by the end of the decade continues to progress. We are pressing ahead with the expansion of the home service force, initially to a strength of about 5,000.

Recruitment to 38 new home service force companies formed earlier this year is going well. We are proceeding with plans to increase the strengths of the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Marines Reserve and the Royal Naval Auxiliary Force. This expansion of our volunteer reserves represents a particularly cost-effective way of augmenting the front line capability of our regular forces.

I come now to the defence programme in the longer term, to which the Defence Committee devoted much of its report. I say straight away that there is much in the report with which I agree. It provides a useful historical perspective on the Government's commitment to the aim of increases, in the region of 3 per cent. a year, in defence expenditure in real terms.

Given the background which I have described, of the substantial increases in defence expenditure since 1978-79 and of our position relative to our allies, the Government have made it clear for a number of years that after 1985-86, we should seek a stable level of defence expenditure. This is a British decision in a British context. We continue to subscribe to the resource guidance of the Alliance as a whole, which includes the 3 per cent. aim as a general guide. Many members of the Alliance have a long way to go before the effort begins to approach that of the United Kingdom.

That said, I agree with the view expressed by the Defence Committee that more emphasis should be placed in the future on outputs rather than inputs as a public and political measurement of defence effort. Personally, I believe that the conduct of many other areas of public policy would benefit from such a change. As the Committee points out, a financial increase is not by itself a measure of increased efficiency, and greater efficiency may enhance military capability at no additional cost. It is to this prize of increased efficiency that our efforts in the years to come must be increasingly directed.

In addressing the implications for the defence programme of the ending of the 3 per cent. aim, it is also important to recognise that this change has been assumed in our plans for a number of years. The Committee recognises that 3 per cent. growth has never been the basis for expenditure plans after 1985-86. The programme set

out in the White Paper "The Way Forward" in 1981—which included provision for Trident—assumed such a growth rate only until that year.

I cannot say precisely how the defence budget will develop in volume terms in the next few years. This depends on a range of factors, some positive, some negative. I cannot engage in a detailed line-by-line, figure-by-figure analysis of the gloomy picture painted by the Defence Committee.

On the Defence Committee's assumptions, it foresees a potential squeeze on the defence budget in real terms, postulating a worst case in which the budget would be £970 million lower in real terms in 1987-88 than in 1985-86. Later in its report, the Committee points to possible offsetting efficiency savings amounting, again on its assumptions, to some £700 million. Although the pluses almost equal the minuses, the conclusion is drawn that they will not be enough to redress the balance; but on the Committee's own arithmetic, the figures are marginal in terms of a total defence budget of some £18 billion to £19 billion a year.

The Committee justifies its concern by reference to the policy to which I am wholly committed, of maintaining flexibility in the defence programme. It must be said that it is seen in a sinister light, as preparing the way for a defence review by stealth.

The truth is less dramatic. The truth which guided my Department's response to the committee's requests for information on our future programme was not new. The Ministry of Defence pointed out to the Committee in 1981, for example, that it was not possible to provide details about the equipment provision in our long-term costing. The Ministry said then that over a 10-year period, the costing becomes increasingly speculative the further forward one tries to look, and that in many cases the assumptions used can be no more than conjecture by officials about how Ministers will settle issues which have still to be clarified and have not yet been put to Ministers.

The status of these planning documents has not changed in the intervening period. My ministerial colleagues and I have sought in the last year or so to institute management arrangements for the programme which fully reflect the increasingly speculative nature of the costing and properly differentiate between the extent of ministerial commitment to individual projects and to the stages within them.

We have also taken account of the politics of defence budgeting, which is like the politics of all other kinds of public expenditure planning. It will, I suspect, come as no surprise to the House to hear that my Department's forward programme is changing constantly for a variety of reasons — changes in military specification, technical difficulties, industrial slippage and so on. These adjustments attract little attention and only the major ones ever come across the desks of Ministers.

All these changes are described as adjustments, but there is one category of adjustment which is different. That is where a Minister changes a programme assumption to take account of whether there is actually the cash available to meet everyone's aspirations. That is called not an "adjustment" but a "cut". Such language is the time-honoured practice of every interest seeking to extend or maintain its programme.

Frankly, the only significant change in the Ministry of Defence is that I have joined that club on behalf of the taxpayer. We now plan our programmes to live within the cash available to meet them. Just because a Department is large and its budget huge, there is no excuse for ignoring the basic rules of prudence that characterise the private sector but not public expenditure planning.

There is, then, no hidden motive behind my reluctance to disclose all the assumptions being made in 1985 about the programme stretching 10 years ahead and beyond. We are continuing properly to plan on a long-term basis to sustain our commitments and the defence roles identified in the 1981 and 1982 White Papers. The resources which can realistically be postulated for defence in the longer term are sufficient to sustain these roles and to provide for the major re-equipment programmes of the services, currently foreseen. Whatever the pressures arising from cash planning, the fact remains that defence expenditure is now some £3 billion higher than when we came into office. We have a steep increase which we know only a Conservative Government would have provided.

Of course I know of the understandable and legitimate concern of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Select Committee for the proper defence of this country, but as I read the Select Committee report I could not help wondering about the role of the Opposition Members on the Select Committee, when only two years ago the Labour party went into a general election seeking to reduce defence expenditure by one third. Now they tell me that £3 billion a year more is not enough. The protestations of the Opposition about the defence programme are, in truth, humbug.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): One way in which savings can be made is through greater co-operation between our European partners in NATO. Can my right hon. Friend say a word about the work of the independent European programme group and how it can be worked into the programme to our advantage?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is most kind in anticipating what remains of my speech. I shall not give details of numbers and in-service dates stretching 10 years ahead. They would, in any case, be overtaken, for a variety of reasons. Nor do I see any case for rushing decisions to replace capabilities until the military requirements and options for meeting them have been properly studied and set alongside other priorities. It is these considerations, rather than funding difficulties, that have governed our approach to future amphibious capability, upon which the Select Committee has commented. The right way forward is to release cash progressively on new equipment against tightly drawn contracts, to maintain a careful balance between commitment and cash and to keep options open in the longer term in order to take account of strategic circumstances, technological opportunities and cash availability nearer the time.

I must say a little more about the amphibious capability replacement, about which I have told the House the precise story. If the idea should once get about in the Ministry of Defence that that part of each individual armed service was likely to get preferment over all the rest of the priorities by leaking its concern either to the press or to hon. Members in order to embarrass Ministers in the Ministry of Defence, it would bring our legitimate planning process to a grinding halt. That is precisely what has happened in this case. I am not prepared to be sucked into that process.

Mr. Douglas: That is a terrible accusation.

Mr. Heseltine: If the hon. Member wants to call it a terrible accusation, so be it but if he should ever serve in a Government, which I doubt, he would find that life is not so rosy as it looks from the Opposition Benches.

Let me say a word, finally, about our programme to improve efficiency. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Defence Procurement will no doubt discuss tomorrow our efforts to increase competition in defence procurement. The problem of defence equipment inflation at a faster rate than elsewhere in the economy, to which the Select Committee on Defence rightly draw attention, is, I believe, a product of our practice in defence contracting in the past, with too many contracts being placed on some form of cost-plus arrangement.

If one wants to ensure that one's prices move up ahead of inflation, cost-plus contracting is the surest way to achieve it. I do not want to minimise the difficulties in moving towards more competition, particularly in areas of high technology. It is difficult to offer a global figure for savings when so few contracts placed in one year are comparable with contracts placed in the next year, but the results to date have been most encouraging.

I told the House recently that, as a result of competition, we were able to buy the Royal Air Force's trainer replacement at a saving of about £60 million, or 35 per cent. less than the estimates upon which the Department had previously worked. Today I am able to announce a decision to place an order for 1,048 mechanised combat vehicles with Guest, Keen and Nettlefold and Sankey. The total programme cost of about £725 million shows a saving of over £100 million against our internal estimates and is a direct result of our policy of increasing competition throughout our procurement policies.

The House may wonder just where, in practice, the concept of a defence price inflater came from. This is not a policy which will win universal acclaim from defence contractors, but their long-term viability depends upon their ability to remain competitive. It depends also upon their capacity to continue to match American defence technology.

I do not believe that, in the years ahead, this will be feasible on a national basis, with one European country competing with another. The search for increases in collaboration is not simply concerned with achieving economy. The hugely fragmented European defence industry will not be a match for the competition, particularly with the likely impact in America of the strategic defence initiative programme, unless urgent efforts are made to eliminate wasteful duplication and to enhance co-operation on research and development. The meeting in London, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) referred, of the independent European programme group next week will be an important test of the willingness of European defence Ministers to take concrete measures in these areas rather than simply to articulate aspirations and aims.

Next week will also see a further meeting of defence Ministers, another matter about which my hon. Friend asked me, involved in the five-nation European fighter aircraft programme. It would be quite wrong of me to say that no differences remain between the collaborative partners. There are still very large differences of view, but I cannot emphasise too strongly the desire of the United Kingdom to bring about a successful collaborative fighter aircraft programme that meets the air staff's requirements, and with equitable industrial arrangements. We in this country seek a true partnership.

I would not expect my colleagues in Germany, France, Italy and Spain to attempt to explain away in their countries a deal that was against their national interests. I will certainly accept no such arrangement on behalf of this country. However, the longer that European resources are frittered away on overlapping research, development and production facilities at a national level, the longer we allow the major world powers to widen the technological gap that is already an awesome chasm.

Finally, I draw attention to a third plank in our effort to make the most efficient use of defence resources: our drive to prune overheads and, to the maximum extent possible, to direct resources to the front line. The army's exercise Lean Look moves 4,000 men to the front line from the administrative tail. The Royal Navy is to find by increased efficiency the men necessary to man those eight destroyers and frigates which, under previous plans, were to have been placed in the standby squadron.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heseltine: Perhaps my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not; I am nearing the end of my speech. In the case of civilian staff, numbers at 1 April 1985 stood at about 174,000, some 74,000 lower than when this Government came to office, and some 7,000 lower than a year ago. The scale of this reduction and the willingness of our civilian staff to adapt to change in accordance with the Government's priorities are insufficiently appreciated. I am immensely grateful for the efforts that they make.

The measures I have described to improve efficiency and to improve the competitiveness of our defence industrial base are of major importance, but they are not, and they never could be, my key responsibilities. Those responsibilities are to sustain the professionalism and the fighting power of our armed forces and to work with our allies to maintain a uniquely successful and long-lasting alliance for peace. The policies set out in the 1985 statement on the Defence Estimates are designed to achieve those aims. I commend them to the House.

4.39 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): I beg to move, To leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'believes that the plans outlined in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985, Cmnd. 9430, in particular the Government's policies of buying, at an ever-increasing cost, the Trident nuclear system, will inevitably lead to further damaging cuts in Britain's real defence and in our conventional contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; believes also, that in view of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's present strategy of "first use" of nuclear weapons, a reduced conventional contribution will increase the risk of a nuclear war in Europe; calls upon the Government to cancel Trident, to remove all nuclear bases from the United Kingdom and work within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation for a substantial reduction in, and eventually the elimination of, battlefield nuclear weapons; notes with alarm the decline of the Merchant Navy; and urges the Government to take positive and immediate steps to arrest and reverse that decline.'.

The Secretary of State made the speech that I had expected him to make. Indeed, it was not greatly different from his speech last year. I do not complain about the fact that he took an hour to make it, because there were many interventions. However, he failed to answer two questions

put to him by Opposition Members, and I hope that the answers will be forthcoming before the end of the debate. During that hour, the Secretary of State had a bash at the Russians, as he did last year. Then he started on the Labour party. Then we went to the Falkland Islands and to Hong Kong. We spent some time on the strategic defence initiative and arms control, and he spent about five minutes on the Select Committee's report about future programmes. The Secretary of State said that he would not attempt a line-by-line, figure-by-figure analysis of all the gloomy reviews. He has better things to do than that. He told us that, in the long term, everything would be all right. We do not know about the long term, but in the shorter term, which we can see easily, the Secretary of State will have serious problems with his defence budget.

I agreed with the right hon. Gentleman about one thing. He made the point clearly that it is for the sovereign nations of NATO to make their decisions about their defence policies within the Alliance. He instanced the ending of the commitment to increase spending by 3 per cent. Indeed, President Reagan made a sovereign, unilateral decision, which turned NATO's strategy upside down, in relation to the SDI. We do not agree with it, but we accept the right of a sovereign Government to determine their own strategy.

The White Paper, like last year's White Paper, does not deal with the real problems of defence policy and expenditure that will occur in the next few years. The only difference between last year's White Paper and this year's one is that another year has gone by and the time for difficult decisions is getting closer. It is no good the Secretary of State trying to hide behind MINIS, contracts and tenders. Difficult decisions will have to be taken by him or by his successor.

It will come as no surprise to the House or to the Secretary of State if I say that the White Paper did not receive rave notices. An editorial in the *Daily Telegraph* the day after the White Paper was published stated:

"Heseltine's Fudge. If the statement on the Defence Estimates were the accounts of a public company they would have at best sent the share price sliding and at worst been qualified by the auditors. The picture which Mr. Michael Heseltine . . . is trying to present to the world has only a passing resemblance to reality."

During the same week, *The Economist* said:

"This bland document has avoided all important decisions and contains no signposts to future defence policies . . . Mr. Michael Heseltine gives the impression that he does not grasp the problem."

That is unfair to the Secretary of State. He grasps the problem in the sense that he understands it; he does not grasp it in the sense of having the courage to do something about it.

Those were the first-night reviews. They have become worse. Yesterday morning, an editorial in the *Daily Mail* stated:

"When two plus two makes three—are Britain's Defence Estimates a confidence trick?"

It comes to the conclusion that they are.

The worst condemnation comes from the Select Committee on Defence, over whose report the Secretary of State skated. The Committee, chaired by the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins), bitterly criticised the Ministry of Defence for giving vague and evasive answers, and for not giving the Committee any information about future requirements. From my reading of the report, I have the clear suspicion that the right hon. Gentleman is up up to his old game of hiding behind national security when trying to avoid political embarrassment to himself, to the Department and to the Government. It is not the first time that he has tried to do so in respect of Select Committees and inquiries in the House.

The Secretary of State knows what the problem is. He may not be as brilliant at reading balance sheets as is the former chairman of the Conservative party and former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson). We heard the other morning that he is extremely good at doing that. But the Secretary of State knows the score. He knows that he does not have enough money to pay for Trident and to maintain an adequate conventional capability in our defence. Although the right hon. Gentleman would not analyse the problem, I shall do so. It comes from two sources, the first being the public expenditure White Paper that was published in January. The phrases in his speech, including "value for money", "fighting for the taxpayer", and "making sure that the taxpayer gets a good deal", are a smokescreen for cuts. The problem also stems from the Government's decision to buy Trident.

Last year, the Secretary of State lost the battle with the Chancellor, and we wait with interest to see what happens this year. We hear on the grapevine around the Palace of Westminster that this year will be stand-and-fight year. I have heard phrases such as, "Doing a Pym". That is not a reference to the recent footballing activities of the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym). It is a reference to his time at the Ministry of Defence, where the folk memory is that he resisted cuts in conventional defence, thereby sowing the seeds, some people say, of his eventual demise. I do not know whether it is wise to adopt similar procedures, and no doubt the Secretary of State will decide for himself.

However, once the Secretary of State conceded a zero growth budget for the years after this, it was inevitable that there would be cuts in defence expenditure. I shall try to show why.

Dr. Hampson: Where are the cuts, and what are the alternative policies proposed by the right hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Davies: That was not up to the usual standard of the hon. Gentleman's interventions. I shall try to explain the cuts in a moment.

After 1985-86, Britain will have a zero growth budget based on Treasury assumptions. The crucial assumption is the Treasury's figure for inflation, which is called the GDP deflator—I see the right hon. Member for Spelthorne nodding, so I must have got that right. The GDP deflator is not a forecast but half assumption, half forecast. This year, the figure is 5 per cent.; for next year, it will be 4·5 per cent.; and for the year after, it will be 3·5 per cent. I am talking about general inflation in the economy, not about defence inflation. If inflation exceeds those estimates, there will have to be cuts in defence expenditure, unless the Treasury changes the figures or it gives the Secretary of State more money, which is unlikely, since the figures relate not only to the Ministry of Defence but to all public expenditure by the Government.

Let us assume that the Treasury figure is not exactly right and that inflation will be 5 per cent. this year, 5 per cent. next year and 5 per cent. the year after. That is a fairly reasonable assumption. On the basis of those figures that will take away an extra £900 million, or 6 per cent.,

[Mr. Davies]

from the defence budget next year and the following year. That is where the cuts will come from, and the margin need only be 1 to 1·5 per cent. each year.

Those figures do not take account of what is called defence inflation. All we can say about that is that generally in the past the increase in the cost of equipment has tended to be greater than the rise in inflation in the economy. I do not know why, but I suspect that the right hon. Gentleman has a point when he says that it is partly due to inefficiency and other reasons. I do not dispute that.

Let us then assume that defence inflation for those two years is only 1 per cent. a year greater than the rate of inflation. That will put at least another £500 million on the defence budget in those two years—*[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State mutters, "No," but he should bear in mind that the Select Committee assumed a 2 per cent. defence inflation figure. Assuming that the general inflation targets in the economy are met, that 2 per cent. amounts to a reduction of £960 million. Again, that is around 6 per cent.

Indeed, the chief of the general staff, Sir Edwin Bramall, said that it would be between about 4 and 7 per cent., and Mr. David Greenwood, a distinguished defence analyst who has not yet been attacked by the chairman of the Conservative party for heresy—I can therefore quote him—said that there will be a funding loss in excess of £2,000 million by 1988-89. It may not be as high as that, but even on different Conservative assumptions it is clear that the Secretary of State or his successor will be faced with a funding deficit—quite apart from Trident—of between £1,000 million and £2,000 million purely because of inflationary assumptions.

That is a horrendous problem, but what about Trident —the Tory party's sacred cow, Trojan horse or cuckoo in the nest? Apparently we are to have a zero growth defence budget. In my view it will be a minus growth defence budget for the reasons that I have just given. But even a zero growth defence budget does not solve the problem of Trident. Over the next three years the costs of Trident will escalate, and by the end of the decade will rise by about £1,100 million a year.

Mr. Heseltine *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Davies: The Secretary of State could have denied that had he wished, because it was in the Select Committee report.

Mr. Heseltine: I could stay on my feet a long time denying the rubbish to which we are listening, but when the right hon. Gentleman reads *Hansard* he will see that he said that the cost would go up by £1,100 million a year. In the peak year, the highest estimates for all the costs of Trident are about £1,000 million.

Mr. Davies: I said that the cost would go up to that figure—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Well that is what I meant to say. But it does not invalidate my case. The costs of Trident are now increasing rapidly, and it is no good the Secretary of State smiling because he thinks he has made a debating point. The fact remains that over the next few years the costs of Trident will escalate rapidly within a zero growth increase in the defence budget.

If the defence budget increases by nothing and the costs of Trident increase rapidly, the money will have to come from elsewhere in the defence budget. I should have thought that was pretty obvious, even to the Secretary of State. That money will have to come from the rest of the defence budget, and it can come only from hardware, equipment, stores, and supplies relating to conventional forces or from military and civilian manpower. The money cannot come from anywhere else, and the Secretary of State knows it.

We have been told in the past that it was perfectly possible to accommodate Polaris and Chevaline—[AN HON. MEMBER: "It was the Labour Government who proposed Chevaline."] I do not deny it. I clearly mentioned it and I expected that sort of reaction. The Secretary of State said that in the past we managed to pay for Polaris out of the defence budget. The total cost of Polaris and Chevaline at 1984-85 prices came to £4·5 billion. If one compares exactly like with like, the total cost of Trident at 1984-85 prices on Government figures will be £9·2 billion. Therefore, Trident costs twice as much as Polaris, and it will account for a much greater proportion of the defence budget than Polaris and Chevaline ever did.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Does not the right hon. Gentleman agree that the reasons that caused the Labour Government secretly to go for Chevaline are exactly the same as those that have caused the present Government—many of us believe rightly—to mantain a new independent nuclear deterrent?

Mr. Davies: I am sorry that I raised this matter. That intervention was wholly irrelevant to the point I was trying to make. I thought that we would have a fairly serious debate on the Defence Estimates and the White Paper, and the point I am trying to make is that Trident costs vastly more than Polaris.

We have been told several times that although Tornado cost more than Trident the Government managed to pay for that. But Tornado was never paid for out of a zero growth defence budget. At the time when money was spent on the Tornado aircraft, we did not have a zero growth defence budget. Had that been attempted, there would have been the horrible problems which the Secretary of State will now have to face when the costs of Trident begin to escalate.

Mr. Heseltine: As Tornado was largely financed out of a budget that was much smaller than the present budget, and as that cost much more than Trident, why is it so impossible to pay for Trident out of a much larger budget?

Mr. Davies: The Secretary of State again misses the point. It is certainly possible to finance Trident out of the budget. All I am saying is that it cannot be financed without deep cuts in our conventional forces and our conventional contribution. In the case of Tornado, the budget was increasing every year. We shall now have a zero growth budget—effectively a minus growth budget —and it will not be possible to finance Trident out of it without substantial cuts in our conventional defence.

We are not comparing like with like when we compare expenditure on Tornado with expenditure on Trident. Trident is a last resort weapon. It is an extraordinary defence policy when apparently the Secretary of State will have to reduce expenditure on front-line weapons of first resort such as tanks, ships and submarines in order to finance a weapon of last resort. That is a topsy-turvy way of running a defence policy.

The money will have to come out of the conventional budget — from equipment, spares, stores, fuel or manpower. If it came entirely from equipment it would mean a 15 per cent. to 20 per cent. cut in the equipment budget. If it came entirely from manpower, it would mean a drop of about 30,000 in civilian manpower and 50,000 in military personnel, roughly equivalent to the British Army of the Rhine. I accept that it will not be done in that way, that there will be an attempt to spread the misery, but there will be manpower cuts and jobs losses. The Secretary of State talks about efficiency, but since the Government came to power, despite 2·5 to 3 per cent. growth in the defence budget, nearly 100,000 jobs have been lost in the military and civilian industries and areas of defence policy. If the cuts take place, that figure will almost certainly double in the next few years. There will be pay restraints, cuts in fuel and stocks, slowing down on acquisitions, and a running down of equipment beyond its economic and military life span.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Is the Labour party advocating an increase or a decrease in defence expenditure?

Mr. Davies: We are advocating the cancellation of Trident because we do not believe that it can be financed without cutting the conventional defence budget and our conventional contribution to NATO.

The greatest burden will still fall on the Navy. The Navy will suffer again as it has suffered in the past because in many ways it is easier to reduce expenditure on the Navy. It is not possible to withdraw the British Army of the Rhine and in any case there would be no public expenditure saving. If the Secretary of State gets his European fighter aircraft, or 25 per cent. of it, at a cost of £6 billion or whatever, he will not want to cut that, so the cuts will fall on the Navy—on frigates, landing ships, submarines and all the equipment used by the Royal Navy.

The Secretary of State said that he intends to maintain orders for three type 23 frigates per year. That will cost almost £500 million. The Government will have to do a great deal better than they have done in the past five years, because that is twice what the Government ordered between 1979 and 1984. In addition, there will be £850 million for amphibious ships required by the marines in Norway as well as the cost of replacing out-of-date equipment and conventional submarines which have become too noisy. We are being asked to believe that all this can be done with a zero growth defence budget, while the cost of Trident escalates rapidly at the same time. No one believes that and it is unworthy of the Secretary of State to pretend that he can do it by means of various devices or wheezes.

The Navy is easy to cut because, unlike the Army and the Air Force, it has never fitted easily into NATO's overall defence strategy.

Sir Patrick Wall (Beverley): That is ridiculous.

Mr. Davies: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will listen to my argument before saying that it is ridiculous. NATO's strategy has always been and still is that conventional war in Europe will be short. The massive superiority that the Soviet Union is supposed to have——

Mr. Stefan Terlezki (Cardiff, West): It does have massive superiority.

Mr. Davies: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will contain himself for a moment. He can challenge me later if he wishes.

The massive superiority that the Soviet Union is supposed to have means that conventional war in Europe is estimated to last no more than six or seven days, after which we use the battlefield nuclear weapons. If that is so, there is no point in having a navy because it takes 10 days for the transport ships to come over from the United States, by which time the war will be over at least in its conventional form. That has been NATO's thinking for a very long time and the Navy does not fit well into that kind of thinking.

The reality is quite different. Although there is superiority in certain areas, there is not any great overall superiority in the Warsaw pact. I believe that if war ever comes—we hope that it never will—it will be a war of attrition in central Europe and will last much longer than the five to 10 days currently envisaged by the NATO planners. In a war of that kind, a navy and especially a navy in the Atlantic is extremely important.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): The hon. Gentleman is basing his argument on completely wrong hypotheses. As a member of the NATO Assembly, I have spoken to a great many people and I know, as the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) will confirm, that no one in NATO is making such assumptions. If the hon. Gentleman will put forward a sensible argument, we are quite willing to have a sensible debate.

Mr. Davies: Of course such assumptions are made. The situation may be changing now, but that was the original reason for the battlefield nuclear weapon—to make up the difference between Stalin's hordes and Western conventional defences. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that I am wrong, he can make his own arguments in his own speech.

The Navy will therefore suffer again as it has suffered in the past.

Sir Patrick Wall: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in the Eastlant, NATO is 80 per cent. dependent on the Royal Navy, particularly in the first three days? Has he never heard of the GIUK gap or the 190 nuclear submarines in the Soviet northern fleet? All those things are at the heart of NATO's strategy. The hon. Gentlenan clearly has no concept of NATO's maritime strategy.

Mr. Davies: I understand that very well, but I know from my conversations with the people concerned that they do not have enough ships. Because the Navy does not fit easily into that kind of strategy for a continental war, it is always easier to impose cuts on the Navy.

Mr. Heseltine: I do not want to get the signals to the Fleet wrong on this. When we are fighting this land war in Europe, how are we to get the stores across the Atlantic to support the armed battle without ships defended by the navies of the Western Alliance?

Mr. Davies: That is exactly my point. That is the case for the Navy. The Secretary of State is in no position to talk about stores because he will be cutting conventional defence so we shall not be able to make that kind of contribution by positioning stores in western Europe so that it is unnecessary to bring so much across the Atlantic.

[Mr. Davies]

The motion also refers to the decline of the Merchant Navy. My hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) will deal with that aspect tomorrow. I wish to deal with the subject of battlefield nuclear weapons because they are extremely dangerous and, as the Secretary of State admitted in evidence to the Select Committee, they are at the core of NATO's strategy. On this issue, this year's White Paper is as distressing as the White Papers last year and the year before. We believe that over a period NATO should get itself into a position to change its present strategy of first use of nuclear weapons. We agree with the article published by General Sir John Hackett in the *International Defence Review* last year. He said:

"I am totally persuaded that the defence of Western Europe must be, however it is conceived, conventional."

In the past few years, there have been signs of some movement within the NATO bureaucracy to try to move away from reliance on battlefield nuclear weapons. General Rogers has made a number of speeches emphasising the need to strengthen conventional defence and some action has been taken. Some of us, perhaps naively, saw this as a small step away from reliance on battlefield nuclear weapons. At Montebello in 1983 NATO ministers agreed to reduce these weapons by 1,400 to 4,600 and to remove completely all atomic demolition mines.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the concept of first use is made necessary by the conventional imbalance? Is he suggesting, therefore, that the NATO countries should spend the same proportion of their economy on defence as the Warsaw pact countries spend?

Mr. Davies: I am grateful for that intervention. We can argue about how it should be achieved, but if there were a conventional balance there would be no need for battlefield nuclear weapons. The Secretary of State would not agree with that, and nor would Lord Carrington or General Rogers. I detect a feeling—the Secretary of State said this to the Select Committee—that we must still have battlefield nuclear weapons, even if we had a conventional balance between the Warsaw pact and NATO.

Some of us thought that there would be some relaxation on the nuclear side as a result of speeches by General Rogers and of the Montebello agreement. I might be being unfair, but it looks as though that was a smokescreen for strengthening and increasing the lethality of battlefield nuclear weapons and was not a genuine attempt to move away from their use and closer to a better conventional balance.

Apparently, the new weapons are far more lethal and have a much greater range than the older ones. The atomic demolition mines, which are to be taken away, were a greater danger to the German population and our soldiers than to the enemy. I understand from newspaper reports —perhaps the Secretary of State will confirm this—that the Government are considering another mine which is to be called the advanced atomic mine, or ADAM for short. It is extremely sophisticated because it can be carried in a rucksack. I hope that the right hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Butler), the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, will resist bringing another ADAM to the Ministry of Defence.

I do not know whether the Government are thinking along these lines, but they should tell the House far more about their plans for battlefield nuclear weapons. The Secretary of State mentioned the new 155 mm atomic shell. Will the Government decide whether to accept it for the British Army of the Rhine? Perhaps the Secretary of State could tell us whether the matter is under active consideration. Perhaps he could tell us what decision will be taken. Many members of the United States Congress have said that we have agreed to the modernisation of those weapons.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): Does the right hon. Gentleman include nuclear depth charges in those strictures? If he does, how will he deal with modern Soviet submarines which are virtually unsinkable by conventional weapons?

Mr. Davies: I fully understand that, in terms of tactical nuclear weapons, what has been suggested is included. I was considering battlefield nuclear weapons in that central zone of Europe where they are especially dangerous. Both sides have them, and we argue that both sides should remove them as far away from the border as possible because of the danger of war breaking out and of those weapons being used.

Mr. Heseltine: If the right hon. Gentleman understands the tactical need for these weapons, will he ensure that the Americans are still allowed to base none of them in Britain for the protection of our submarines?

Mr. Davies: We have said clearly that we will not accept American nuclear weapons on British soil. Such a decision must be taken by a sovereign British Government. I agreed with the Secretary of State when he said that it is ultimately the prerogative of sovereign Governments to take that decision.

Mr. Heseltine: If the right hon. Gentleman agrees that there is no legitimate deterrence against this form of Soviet weapon and that our submarines cannot be protected except by this nuclear capability, what sort of protection will he offer our submarines?

Mr. Davies: I did not say that. I said, in regard to battlefield nuclear weapons in central Europe, that there is a serious problem because Warsaw pact and NATO troops are so close together. If war broke out in that part of Europe, it could easily become a nuclear war, which would raise the problems of political control.

Mr. Speed: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept the need for nuclear depth charges?

Mr. Davies: We have said clearly that we will not accept American nuclear bases on British soil.

Mr. Robert Atkins: So what protection will the right hon. Gentleman give?

Mr. Davies: We understand NATO strategy, which is based on flexible response. The weapons that the hon. Gentleman talks about are part of NATO strategy. My party has made it clear that it wants to work in NATO to change that strategy because we believe that it is out of date.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: No. My speech will be as long as the Secretary of State's if I continue to give way. I should like

finally to consider the strategic defence initiative. I believe that it will be extremely difficult to prevent the star wars initiative from becoming an arms race in space. We agree with the Government's analysis and with the analysis in the lecture that the Foreign Secretary gave about the dangers and the philosophical inconsistencies in star wars. I do not believe that it will be easy to stop star wars. I do not accept the rather simplistic distinction that the Government try to draw between research and development. If anybody believes that American industry will stop at research and not go on to development, they have not read about or understood what has happened in the arms race during the past 30 years.

Star wars fits perfectly into the American psyche because it tries to wrestle with difficult moral problems. I respect that side of it. It is an enormous moral problem to base defence policy on mutually assured destruction. Stars wars rejects that, the Government's policy, and therefore NATO strategy. Star wars is part of the American dream and the belief that technology can solve moral and political problems. Moreover, a lot of money will be made out of it. I find it extremely difficult to believe that, when those three factors come together, the star wars project will be stopped at research.

Many people who have created star wars regard it as an attempt on the part of the United States to return to the golden age of the 1950s when that country had superiority in nuclear weapons. Caspar Weinberger said it clearly. He is reported to have said:

"If we can get a system which is effective, we will be back in the situation we were in when we were the only nation with a nuclear weapon".

That is quite clearly an attempt to gain nuclear superiority. It cannot be gained on earth any more because Russia will try to catch up. I should like the Government to show a little more resolution and to come out with other European Governments in NATO and say, "We do not favour star wars and are not prepared to participate in the research and we believe that it will lead to another nuclear arms race."

Perhaps I might conclude by quoting a distinguished American scientist, Professor William E. Burrows, who wrote in the *Spectator* of 30 March:

"But where is this race likely to end? American fighting mirrors, laser battle stations, space planes and manned attack platforms will sooner or later co-inhabit the heavens with their Soviet counterparts. Orbiting lasers made in California will be closely followed by space mines made in Yaroslavl, and although the lasers may be technically superior to the mines, that will count for little or nothing if the mines do their job at the crucial moment. It will therefore be deemed imperative to develop weapons that can attack the mines before they attack the lasers that are supposed to attack the ICBMs that are launched to attack the cities and silos. The prospect—now nearly at hand—of extending the vast and intricate network of super-sensitive warning systems and hairtrigger explosives hundreds and thousands of miles straight up is stupefying. The earth itself will have been turned into a gigantic orbiting bomb."

That is an extremely realistic assessment of what will happen, and I hope that the British Government will say that they will have no part in it.

The choice presented by the White Paper is clear and simple. We can have strong conventional forces and no Trident or weak conventional defences and Trident. The Government have chosen to have Trident. We believe that that choice diminishes the defence and security of Britain and increases the risk of nuclear war in Europe.

5.20 pm

Sir Humphrey Atkins (Spelthorne): When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State opened the debate he referred to the fact that the Select Committee on Defence, of which I am Chairman, had commented that he did not devote very much space in the White Paper to broad policy issues. However, he spent quite a bit of the first part of his speech doing that, for which I was grateful. I hoped we might hear something of the same from the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) but we heard nothing of the kind. I do not have the faintest idea what he thinks about policy except that he does not understand NATO policy at sea. The right hon. Gentleman did a good deal of reading from newspapers—whether they form the basis of Labour party policy or not, I do not know. There was some questioning of my right hon. Friend, perfectly properly, but the right hon. Gentleman quoted many figures and got most of them wrong. He would do much better to stick to the figures in the Select Committee report, which are correct. It is unfortunate that his are not. He should follow our figures rather than invent some of his own, which are demonstrably wrong.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Demonstrate that they are wrong then.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: The right hon. Gentleman said that three type 23 frigates would cost £500 million. They do not, and this is stated in the White Paper. They cost £110 million each. If he cannot multiply 110 by three he should not be sitting on the Opposition Front Bench. According to the Opposition's amendment, the Labour Party's policy is to cancel Trident, to remove all nuclear bases from the United Kingdom and not to allow nuclear depth charges anywhere near the country, to do away with battlefield nuclear weapons and do something about the Merchant Navy.

I did not hear the right hon. Gentleman say one word about our conventional forces. Does he think they are the right size, too big or too small? He should have spoken about that. No doubt when the debate is wound up by one of his hon. Friends we shall be let into the secret. That is all we know, at the moment, about Labour party policy —cancel Trident, get rid of nuclear bases, and hope for the best. At least the amendment which has been tabled by the leader of the SDP, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) does not go quite as far as that. He also wants to cancel Trident but he wants to strengthen Britain's conventional defence. I am sure that he will tell us, if he is called, by how much he thinks it is necessary to strengthen Britain's conventional defence to provide the same level of deterrence that is provided by Trident. How many divisions, how many ships and how many aircraft will that involve, and what will be the cost? If that is his proposition, he owes it to the House to elaborate it, and I hope and believe that he will.

My right hon. Friend spoke about the comments made in the report by the Select Committee, but before I refer to those comments I want to speak about something that was not in our report. Nowhere in our report do we quarrel with the Government's assessment of the level of defence that it is necessary for us in the West to maintain.

Annex A of the defence White Paper, which I do not think the right hon. Member for Llanelli has read, sets out starkly the balance of forces between the Warsaw pact and NATO. In every area except one, the Warsaw pact

[Sir Humphrey Atkins]

countries have a superiority over NATO. In nuclear terms, they have more strategic systems, more intermediate systems and more short-range systems. In conventional terms they have more soldiers, twice as many tanks, twice as many aircraft and more than twice as much artillery. At sea, they have twice as many submarines. In surface warships in the north and in maritime aircraft, NATO enjoys, for the time being, a marginal superiority. The Warsaw pact has total superiority in chemical weapons. It has hundreds of thousands of tonnes and we have none.

If ever there was an example of the futility of unilateral disarmament gestures, this is it. Nearly 30 years ago—I think it was in 1957 — Britain decided not to use chemical weapons and disposed of all that it had. We threw them into the Atlantic. The only response was the continuation of the Russian research, development and production of these fearful weapons, so that we are now at a total disadvantage. If anyone seriously believes that gestures of unilateral disarmament work, I can only say that he needs his head examined. History shows that such gestures do not work.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Is the right hon. Gentleman in favour of manufacturing the same gases and chemical warfare weapons that the Russians possess?

Sir Humphrey Atkins: No, Sir. I am in favour of preventing them from being used. The West has prevented those or any other weapons being used against it for 40 years by employing the nuclear deterrent. The idea that, with a grand gesture, one can throw away a weapon and expect a potential enemy to do the same has no basis in history. We all wish that this state of affairs did not exist, but it does. It is the height of irresponsibility to seek to diminish the level of defences that is set out in the White Paper.

The second point I want to make, which is not spelt out in our report, is that we recognise and applaud the efforts that the Secretary of State is making to improve efficiency and to obtain better value for money. He mentioned a number of them and they are noted in our report.

The transfer of manpower from tail to teeth is still proceeding. The contracting out of functions has produced some savings and will produce more. The increasing number of purchases of equipment by competitive tendering, which my right hon. Friend spoke of, is increasing, although I must confess to a doubt as to what level that has reached. The White Paper speaks of something like 60 per cent. but the only figures I can find suggest a level of about 38 per cent. No doubt that is something with which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement can deal later. There are prospects of savings by international collaboration and no doubt the reorganisation of the Ministry of Defence will produce some savings too. I accept that it is too early to judge the extent of the savings that will flow from these efforts but they could and should produce useful ones, thereby enabling us to have more defence for the same money, which is what we all want.

The Government told us in the 1984 public expenditure White Paper that after the current year, no extra money will be available for defence. That was the starting point of the Select Committee's inquiry. The Committee took the Government's statement to mean that there would be no growth in real terms or, to put it another way, that there would be level funding in real terms. That leaves aside Falklands-related expenditure, which has always been additional and which will be declining. The Select Committee took evidence to try to determine what the Government's policy would mean in terms of trying to defend ourselves. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State observed, pounds do not defend us; we are defended by the weapons and the manpower that the pounds buy.

The Committee discovered, as it has reported and as everyone knows, that level funding in real terms does not mean what many take it to mean. We were given three reasons for this, and they were not those elaborated by the right hon. Member for Llanelli. First, the cash which is available each year is adjusted from year to year by means of the GDP deflator. That involves a guess or an estimate of or an allowance for increases in the retail price index. I am sure that in theory that mechanism can produce the same level of funding.

However, what the right hon. Member for Llanelli may have missed, but what my right hon. Friend knows only too well and has spoken about, is that the prices of tanks and guns increase more quickly than those of motor cars and cookers. I do not know why that is so, but my right hon. Friend has given some reasons why this happens. Over the past 10 years, the increase in price over the RPI, which is called the relative price effect, has been nearly 2 per cent. That involves a great deal of money and the difference that it makes in any year is over £500 million. My right hon. Friend spoke about the Committee's figures. They are not the Committee's figures. They are his. Every figure that the Committee quoted was given to it in evidence by him or his officials. The Committee has merely written them down and added them up.

The second reason, of course, is the fact that the defence budget is sensitive to the exchange rate. The document before us today assumes a rate of $1·38 to the pound. We are all aware that the rate today is about $1·26. That makes a difference of £180 million.

The third reason is the cash allowance for pay. That is at a figure of 3 per cent. per annum. The Committee was told in evidence that every 1 per cent. above that costs £31 million at 1983-84 prices. Last week's events precisely illustrate our anxieties. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced last Thursday that as from 1 April this year service pay would be increased—as recommended by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body—and would add 7·3 per cent. to the pay bill. No one grudges the services a penny of that increase, but where will the money come from? The Prime Minister gave the answer. She said:

"The additional costs . . . will be offset by economies or reductions elsewhere in the defence programme."—[*Official Report*, 6 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. *194*.]

At 1983-84 prices, the additional costs over the 3 per cent. allowed come to £133 million.

Perhaps I might remind the House——

Mr. Douglas: One type 23 frigate.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: I was going to remind the House that it is rather more than the cost of a type 23, which is given as £110 million, or, if the House prefers, it is slightly more than the cost of the 130 Tucano trainers that the Royal Air Force is buying from Short Bros Ltd.

Dr. Hampson: My right hon. Friend raised an interesting point yesterday in his questioning of Mr.

Levene. It is a pity that the point was not pursued. At the end of five years, Mr. Levene was hoping to have a 10 per cent. reduction in his budget which, on a cumulative basis, means savings of billions of pounds on procurement at a time when he is running a budget of £8 billion to £9 billion.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: My hon. Friend may have been looking over my shoulder when I was making my notes. I wonder whether he will allow me to come to that point in a moment.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Was the figure of £960 million, which the Select Committee used as a deficit figure, arrived at on the basis of the Treasury's GDP deflator assumptions on inflation or on higher figures? Did the Committee assume that there will be no slippage in terms of general inflation?

Sir Humphrey Atkins: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will do me the courtesy of reading the document. The figure is not £960 million; it is £970 million. He will find on page 32 how we arrived at that calculation. It is not difficult.

The Committee used the figures that it obtained from the Treasury with the assumptions that the Committee made about the GDP deflator. It would be much quicker if the right hon. Gentleman would do me that courtesy. I mentioned the frigate. The Committee expressed anxiety about the rate of frigate ordering. My right hon. Friend mentioned it. It gave us enormous satisfaction last year when he announced that he was reversing the policy of his predecessor, Sir John Nott, and was going to keep 50 frigates in the active fleet. The trouble is that many of them are becoming old.

I understand that frigates last 25 years. By 1991, 18 of our fleet of destroyers and frigates will be that old. There are 11 on order at the moment. To keep up our numbers, a further seven must be ordered, not before 1991 but in time to be in service by 1991. I think that I am right in saying—I am open to correction—that they take the best part of five years from ordering to joining the fleet. That means that they must be ordered by the end of next year if my right hon. Friend is to live up to his undertaking. He may say that he only needs to order five because we have 52 and he undertook to keep 50. That is a point that I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to elaborate a little further when he replies, because that was my right hon. Friend's undertaking and we are anxious that it is apparently not being met at the moment. We should like to hear that it is.

I should like to return to the subject of level funding, which we are asked to accept and which turns out to be a diminution in the money available, as best we can calculate, of £970 million—6·1 per cent. of the total.

There seem to be three ways in which that gap can be covered. The first is a further reduction in the number of civilians employed. My right hon. Friend has announced his target of reducing the number of civilians employed by a further 8,000 by 1988. That will save him something under £100 million. The second is a further contracting out. I do not know how much of that can be done. It may be a little but I question whether those two together come to more than £200 million. We therefore fall back on competition.

My right hon. Friend recently appointed Mr. Peter Levene as the chief of defence procurement. He gave evidence to the Committee yesterday afternoon in public—anyone could have come to listen and some people did—and he was asked how much he could save by introducing policies of futher competition. Naturally, he could not give a figure as he had not been in position long enough to make such a projection.

If about another £800 million in savings are needed, that is almost 10 per cent. of the procurement budget. My right hon. Friend will agree that not all the procurement budget is susceptible to competition, although he is an enthusiastic supporter of competition. This is an enormous saving, and my right hon. Friend believes he can make it. I hope that he can, but I hope he realises the considerable task that he has set Mr. Levene.

Theoretically, it would be possible to save money on manpower. However, the Committee took evidence from many people, including the principal military adviser to the Government, the chief of the defence staff, Field-Marshal Sir Edwin Bramall, who told us several times that he could see no room for further reductions in manpower. If the Government accept the field-marshal's advice, all the saving must come from equipment. As I have said, my right hon. Friend appeared confident that he could make this saving, and I only hope he can.

Finally, little has been said in the debate or in the White Paper about service men and women. There are not many of them, but they carry a tremendous burden. This country is different from others. The Committee members were recently in Norway and we visited neutral Sweden. Both those countries have what they call the concept of total defence. That means that the defence of the country is everyone's business. They have compulsory national service, but everyone, whether in the services or not, regards it as their business to lend a hand with defence in the military sector or, when they grow older, in the civil defence sector.

That has never been the case in this country. Defence in this country has always been the business of the few people we hire to carry it out for us—the services. We have fine services and we must make sure that they get the best equipment and training, proper pay and all the support that we can give them. Our services are small, but I often recall the story, which may be apocryphal, of two naval ships passing in mid-Atlantic. The American ship signalled to the British ship, "Greetings from the largest navy in the world." The reply came back, almost at once, "Greetings from the best."

We have the best Navy and the best forces, and it would be wrong not to pay tribute to them.

5.40 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): I have no difficulty joining the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) in paying tribute to all three of our armed services. The quality of our service men and women is exceptional.

We can all be pleased that since 1977 we have fulfilled our obligations to improve the conventional forces of NATO better than any other country in western Europe. However, the debate focuses on the main issue facing this country, which is what is to happen to our defence spending after 1986.

The Select Committee will have done a great service if it has awoken the House and the country to the reality that stares us in the face. As the right hon. Member for Spelthorne said, decisions have been announced in public

[Dr. David Owen]

expenditure White Papers for the past two years and some of us have been trying to draw attention to the problems that will face this country in a year's time.

The House now has the opportunity to face the reality. The Select Committee's report is devastating. Let us be under no illusions and let us have no more talk about level or stable funding. It is clear that from 1986 onwards the defence budget will be falling inexorably and remorselessly.

If we pursue the Trident nuclear option, the cuts in our conventional defence spending will be even greater. The Secretary of State inherited the Trident decision, but he must realise that if the Government or the country wish to pursue that decision—I believe that it was a mistake and I have opposed it since 1977—they must find the extra resources to maintain our conventional defence forces. We cannot duck that choice.

The Select Committee concludes that planned defence commitments cannot be met within planned levels of spending. It says that beyond 1985-86, the defence budget will fall in real terms by 0·5 per cent. in 1986-87 and 0·7 per cent. in 1987-88, on a Falklands-exclusive basis. The Committee believes that the ending of the 3 per cent. real increase in spending will lead to

"cancellations, slowing-down of acquisitions and the running on of equipment beyond its economic life span."

The report concludes that better management and savings through efficiency reforms will not be sufficient to avoid a decline in "overall capability" and the possible

"elimination of a major commitment."

The report comes before the House with all-party support and, by any standards, it is a devastating criticism. The Secretary of State should have devoted much more of his speech to grappling with the issues. The report highlights a major gap between what is planned for defence spending and what the Government are making available. It estimates that the real reduction in defence spending by 1987-88 will be £970 million, compared with the 1985-86 budget—a cut of 6·1 per cent. on a Falklands-exclusive basis. That is made up of a sterling-dollar depreciation of 2 per cent., pay awards exceeding the Government's target by 1 per cent. and a higher rate of inflation in defence equipment costs—the relative price effect—of 3·1 per cent.

The right hon. Member for Spelthorne was right to remind us that the report is, if anything, unduly optimistic, despite presenting the figures that I have given as a worst-case scenario. We heard last week of the armed forces pay award of 7·3 per cent., costing £200 million per annum and exceeding by 4 per cent. the Government's target; the Select Committee report assumes only a 2 per cent. overshoot.

The Select Committee report also assumes a sterling-dollar exchange rate of $1·26 and the rate last week fluctuated between $1·24 and $1·26. I agree that it is almost impossible to predict exchange rates, but the figure in the Select Committee's report was a fairly generous assumption.

The report assumes increases in defence equipment costs of 3·1 per cent. above inflation, but many senior and serious figures who have examined the escalation of defence expenditure pitch the figure much higher. One does not have to go all the way with David Greenwood —whose unit in Aberdeen has done some good work—who claims that the figure should be 6 per cent., but I am sure that 3·1 per cent. is an underestimate.

The Secretary of State is right to claim some credit for his drive for cost-efficiency savings. We all recognise that a long overdue extra effort has been put in into that area. I have been violently critical of the way in which Mr. Levene was appointed. It was a disgrace to the Civil Service and to the House, but he is there and we had better accept him. We must hope that he can produce savings to justify his salary and the manner in which he was appointed.

Let us examine where our existing spending on conventional defence has brought us, even with the extra money that has been put in over the past 10 years. I do not agree with all the strictures in a recent article in *The Economist*, but it is worth considering how a fairly objective source views our defence effort. It said:

"The . . . Army is already the most poorly equipped of all the main armies on NATO's Central Front. It has less heavy artillery than the Dutch; fewer tanks than the French, the West Germans or the Americans (in Europe); and a lop-sided anti-aircraft system based entirely on missiles—no guns at all. It needs more equipment than is now in its long-term plans—not less."

Many people will be arguing for a replacement for our fighter aircraft, but it is not even in the long term costings. That is the undisclosed problem. All the senior service men know that they cannot have, on current plans, the fighter aircraft. The Secretary of State and his officials are right to negotiate for a European replacement, but the aircraft is not in the long-term costings. If that is to go in, what will come out?

The Secretary of State has refused to answer questions about the replacement for Fearless and Intrepid. He seemed to think that the Royal Marines were putting undue pressures on him, but many of us saw in 1980 and 1981 that the Royal Marines were nearly taken out during the Nott review and we are not prepared to sit back and say nothing about our fear that a squeeze will be put on an element of our armed forces which often does not have strong support in the Ministry of Defence.

We have the right to say that we believe that the amphibious wing is an essential element of our defence forces. We want reassurance that there will be a replacement for Fearless and Intrepid. Perhaps it will have to be a cheaper ship, because it is hard to see how we can replace those ships with another of the same type.

The *Herald Tribune*, which is usually reliable, carried a report of the recent meeting of NATO's Defence Ministers. It said:

"The ministers also reaffirmed, as expected, their long-standing goal of increasing each member country's military spending by at least 3 per cent. a year after inflation."

I could not believe that, so I got hold of a copy of the communiqué of the meeting of Ministers. The Spanish Minister put in a reservation and I was sure that our Secretary of State must have done so. Not a bit of it. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman has the brass neck to come to the House and tell us that he still reaffirms that commitment.

The resource guidance in the communiqué says:

"Notwithstanding the above efforts to improve the output from existing expenditures it will be necessary to increase the allocation of resources to defence in real terms with most nations achieving rates of real increase higher than those in the past . . . The 3 per cent. formula is confirmed as a general guide."

It is not fair, reasonable or honest for the Secretary of State to be a signatory to that communiqué without making the facts clear to his allies and friends.

Last Monday, when I visited Congress, I asked some of the senior people there whether they knew what was happening to the British defence budget. They had not a clue. They had not absorbed what would happen between 1986 and 1988. *[Interruption.]* I talked to senior people there. They all paid tribute to the fact that during the past 10 years Britain had been the best contributor to NATO's defence budget. Now there will be absolute reductions.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East) *rose——*

Dr. Owen: The hon. Gentleman can make his speech in his own way, if he has different information on that.

Mr. Mates: I do not know who the right hon. Gentleman saw in Washington, but two months ago our Committee was there and we met the Armed Services Committee of the Senate and the House, which were fully aware of what we were about to do. Indeed, we discussed the fact that the Americans were about to have to do the same.

Dr. Owen: If the Americans make defence cuts as deep as those we are making in Europe, we in Europe shall have to face serious effects. I repeat my remark that the senior people of Congress to whom I have spoken have not faced up to the reality of how deep the cuts will be. When they do, there will be a serious backlash. Indeed, it is only recently that this House has begun to face up to that.

This is the last year in which we can make a decision not to go ahead with Trident without effectively pouring money down the drain. The Government must reassess the Trident decision. *The Economist* stated about the cancellation of Trident:

"If the government fails to do it, it will be condemning the conventional forces to damaging cuts in both numbers and effectiveness. There is no sensible alternative to solid conventional forces, whereas there are sensible-if-second-best alternatives to the Trident nuclear deterrent."

I have never denied that if one compares Trident with other systems in terms of sophistication, capacity to penetrate anti-ballistic missile defences, and having sea room for submarines, Trident is the best system available. There is no question about that. I am extremely glad that the United States has the Trident submarine missile system, as we all should be.

The United Kingdom however, will pay a heavy price if we pursue the Trident system. We must face up to that for many reasons.

Dr. Hampson: What about the *The Sunday Times?*

Dr. Owen: *The Sunday Times* can have its views. All quotes are selective, and the hon. Gentleman must know that. We can produce many different newspapers and, indeed, we could start quoting from the *Morning Star*, if we really wanted to.

The House must assess the best balance of defence spending for a country which faces serious economic difficulties, and which is no longer a super-power. Many of us see a value in retaining a nuclear deterrent, if we can possibly afford it, have supported and will continue to support Polaris, but are prepared to admit that Trident is not a natural follow-on from Polaris. It represents a substantial increase in cost, megatonnage and warhead numbers.

There are other options, which must be studied. There is the straight option of replacing Polaris. Although that is difficult, British Aerospace believes that it could do that. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) can make his own speech. I would not choose that Polaris option. We must discuss the matter with the French. It is outrageous that we in western Europe can pursue western European defence in the Western European Union in complete isolation. The present dialogue between Germany and France is more intimate, with far greater exchange of information and even strategic thinking, than that between Britain and France. We should certainly study the M5 missile, which the French will order to replace their M4 missile. I doubt whether there will be much difference in cost. The United States navy is already using another option, which is to have cruise missiles and to put them on to submarines. Further options are land-based or air-launched cruise missiles. They are all serious options.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): No.

Dr. Owen: The hon. Gentleman can shake his head and disagree, but he was party to the original decisions. Many hon. Members and people in the armed services, such as admirals, generals and air marshals, believe that it is time that the issue was reassessed because the price is so formidable.

I fear that if we cling to the belief that it is Trident or no other nuclear deterrent in the United Kingdom, we may end up with nothing. If we want to be reminded of that, we need only read the motion in the name of the leader of the Labour party. I do not find it difficult to understand why he signed the motion, but I have difficulty in understanding why the right hon. Member for Birmingham Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) signed it. After the election he seemed to be aware that there were reasons for the Labour party's defeat. In an article in *The Times* in July 1983 he wrote:

"the notion that we might give up our nuclear protection if others did not do the same was overwhelmingly rejected.

Opposition to our policy was intensified by the confusion that surrounded our proposals. We said that NATO remained our protection. But we refused to accept our NATO obligations."

In July 1984 an article in *The Times* stated that when the right hon. Gentleman commented on the new Labour Party defence paper he said:

"for Britain to play a non-nuclear role and remain a proper member of NATO, as provided for in Labour's defence policy, contained 'a certain ambiguity which we have got to resolve'."

It appears that he has resolved that ambiguity by giving up. He has put his name to a resolution that we should remove all nuclear bases from the United Kingdom.

The devastating consequences of that need to be faced. It is reasonable and understandable to argue, as many people will argue, that we cannot afford to remain a nuclear weapon state. But to argue that NATO should not retain nuclear weapons and, as a principal ally of the United States, to argue that we should not facilitate the United States remaining a nuclear weapon state, and that we should back away from the nuclear deterrence of NATO is an outrage.

When the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) who tried to weave his way through an impossible task, was asked about nuclear depth charges, he was completely floored. I am talking not only about United States nuclear depth charges, but British ones. Are we not to allow the Navy to use British nuclear depth charges, which is about

[Dr. Owen]

the only weapon system capable of dealing with deep-diving Soviet nuclear submarines? They are one of the most serious threats to merchant shipping in a war. The right hon. Gentleman argues that a war in Europe will continue for a longer time than was thought. If that is so, we must ensure tht we have stores and conventional back-up to sustain Europe. He was right to point out that, if that happens, our Navy will need not only ships, but the weapon systems to deal with the Soviet Union and its ever-increasing weaponry sophistication. Does the right hon. Gentleman genuinely believe that the Navy should not be allowed to use nuclear depth charges?

There is the extraordinary question about battlefield nuclear weapons. I have long argued against them, and that we should withdraw them from within 150 km of the East-West frontier. That should be done as a British and NATO decision. Britain should argue for it, but it should be a collective decision within NATO. One can afford to take battlefield nuclear weapons out if one has intermediate missiles in Europe. We must face that. We cannot possibly withdraw battlefield nuclear weapons from a 150 km zone and have no United States based nuclear deterrents in Europe.

We should recognise that, having taken the NATO modernisation decision, it allows us to withdraw battlefield nuclear weapons. The criticism of NATO strategy is that although it almost accepts the worry that many of us have about the early use of nuclear weapons and the problem of "use or lose" by having nuclear weapons close to what could be an accidental border incident, we have the capacity with cruise missiles to remove battlefield weapons. As the House knows, it should be possible to take out Pershing II as part of negotiations on our intermediate range nuclear forces. It was always part of the modernisation decision that it was neccessary not merely because of the SS20, but for a United States presence in Europe with nuclear weapons.

Thus it was always slightly false to say that, if the Soviets withdrew all their SS20s, we would withdraw all our cruise and Pershings. In the arms control negotiations it would be much better to return to the "walk in the woods" formula.

The Secretary of State was right to praise President Reagan's recent decision to continue SALT II. If President Reagan is going for a serious arms control agreement, he will have to take several decisions that Mr. Weinberger and his hitherto Right-wing Republican friends will not like. It was important that, in keeping to the numerical limits of SALT, President Reagan not only made that decision, but said the he was prepared to dismantle the Poseidon submarine. The negotiations in Geneva will be very difficult, and every pressure will be put on the western members of Nato in order to split them apart. But as long as the United States is negotiating seriously, and is not breaking the SALT II treaty limits, and as long as the President—who never supported that treaty anyway—is within those limits, we are in the serious ball park of proper negotiations. Of course, the Soviet Union will use propaganda. In many senses, the United States does the same — *[Interruption.]* Of course it does, and everybody knows it. There is a propaganda battle going on for public opinion on both sides.

But the serious negotiations will be those that we do not hear about. They will be back-channel negotiations, and they will not come until the middle of next year. We probably will not hear much serious output until the end of next year. But it is vital that we should keep to the strategy of negotiating for deep cuts, and that the SDI should be seen as something that is done for research and development way into the future. The United States and the Soviet Union have been carrying out such research for more than 15 years, but because it was hyped up by the so-called star wars speech, everything has got out of proportion.

It is perfectly clear to most people that the deep cuts negotiating strategy is still viable and credible, and an essential step in creating confidence in the United States that there could never be any Soviet first strike potential. It is very much in NATO's interest that we should hold the United States to that negotiating strategy. Moreover, it is very much in the interests of western Europe that we should not be seduced into supporting the Reagan concept of the SDI—the impervious defence—by being sucked into the research and development. We shall not get any of the serious research and development anyway, as most of it will be highly classified and kept in the United States.

It was a good decision to support the EUREKA programme, which is a predominantly civilian programme. It was also a good decision to invest in science and technology that is co-ordinated throughout western Europe. Indeed, the Secretary of State rightly attaches great importance to that. Hon. Members would be most unwise to feel that we were strengthening the Alliance by pursuing and supporting too enthusiastically a mistaken policy initiative in terms of the SDI. Let us have research and development by all means — *[Interruption.]* I believe that one should not, under any circumstances, deploy. Hopefully, we could give some confidence to the Soviet Union by amending the ABM treaty so that there can be no deployment unless there has been at least a four to five year warning. Under the present ABM treaty, one is perfectly entitled to carry out research and development, but one is not allowed to deploy. However, the problem is that only six months' notice has to be given. If we could suggest an amendent to that treaty, it would be the best way of ensuring that the effective research and development carried out by the United States and the Soviet Union could go ahead with no risk of deployment for at least four to five years. That would be a sensible strategy. As a nuclear weapons state, we have the right to challenge, on occasion, the United States—our friend and ally.

Britain should also be pursuing more vigorously a comprehensive test ban. That is the one negotiation in which Britain is a party to as a direct partner with the United States and the Soviet Union. It was wrong to decide to withdraw and to postpone those negotiations, and the sooner that we get back on track, the sooner we are likely to see some discipline in the non-proliferation treaty. After all, we face the real risk of Pakistan making a nuclear explosion within the next year or so. Thus, a comprehensive test ban should be another of our priorities.

We have much more chance of our voice being heard in the United States if we pay our proper share of the conventional defence of western Europe On present plans, the United States will be extremely worried about our defence policy and about the cutback in our conventional forces.

6.5 pm

Sir Patrick Wall (Beverley): I hope that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) will forgive me for not pursuing his argument about the financing of our defence policy. However, I agree with him that it is good that that matter has now been thoroughly ventilated in the House. The argument will obviously continue when we come down to brass tacks in the next few years. I also of course agree with what he said about amphibious warfare ships.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made an excellent speech, in which he dealt with the strategic position in the world today. With the advent of Mr. Gorbachev, a new situation now exists between East and West. Mr. Gorbachev is young and intelligent, but he is still a product of the old regime and was put into power by it. We must remember that the attitude displayed by Mr. Gorbachev, the Politburo and the marshals is becoming more and more bellicose. The situation will worsen unless Mr. Gorbachev is allowed to direct money away from arms and towards improving agriculture and the Soviet Union's economy.

We should appreciate that the leadership of the USSR is becoming more aggresive. One need only consider Russia's 25,000-tonne Typhoon submarines, its continual deployment of SS20s, the armoured helicopter regiments or the 30,0000 men in the Spetanaz force who are ready to be dropped from Aeroflot aeroplanes in order to assasinate military and political figures in NATO countries. Furthermore, the Soviet Union's military exercises always end in nuclear war or chemical warfare. As has been said, we cannot reply to the latter. What will happen if the USSR's economy deteriorates even further and if the unrest in the satelite countries and in the component parts of the USSR becomes more violent? I suggest that Mr. Gorbachev may well then have to choose between aggression or disintegration.

The European Community is being undermined in every way by the Soviet Union—by spies and agents provocateurs, through the use of organisations such as CND and even by the use of some trade unions. I believe that there will soon be an effort to woo the Federal Republic of Germany away from NATO. Even more importantly, there will be continued efforts to split NATO America from NATO Europe by means of the arms control talks at Geneva. I suggest that that will be done by the Soviets making minor concessions on IMF, which Europe would obviously like, provided that the United States agrees not to deploy its ABM system when its research is completed.

Even Opposition Members must realise that the United States is the key to European defence. The anti-American remarks of some Opposition Members only provoke those who believe in fortress America. I shall tell the House of some remarks made at a recent Pacific caucus in Hawaii. We were told that 60 per cent. of American people do not care what happens outside the United States and that because of continual criticism from abroad, they are turning more and more inwards. We were also told that the United States does 25 per cent. more trade with the Pacific basin than with Europe. Furthermore, it was said that with a major Soviet build-up in the Pacific, the NATO area could no longer have priority. It was also said that the United States had created 14 million more jobs in the same time as Europe had lost 4 million jobs. We were told that the EEC was frozen into rigidity and was squabbling over minor matters. Finally, we were told once again that Europe must do more for its own defence. We were reminded that the Nunn-Roth amendment was lost by only eight votes.

We must remember that we depend on the United States. If the Opposition policy set out in the amendment were adhered to, I fear that we would have little support from the United States, and we should be out of NATO. We depend on the United States because today the United States ICBMs are obsolete compared with those of the Soviet Union. Therefore, we have MX, Midgetman and the Trident D5. As the right hon. Member for Devonport has said, the latter is probably the best weapon in the world. Tactically, we rely on the United States for Pershing II, ground-launched cruise missiles and cruise missiles in submarines and surface ships. Conventionally, we shall rely on new detection, ranging and weapons systems which will, probably in the next decade, render tactical nuclear weapons obsolete and unnecessary.

There is a weakness. We all know that USSR now has sufficient ICBMs and submarine-launched ballistic missiles for a first strike. What is not realised is that they have been spending the equivalent of $2 billion a year on civil defence. That is apart from anything that they have spent on anti-ballistic missile equipment or research. They have had an ABM system for over 10 years, and Marshal Sokolov has said publicly that the USSR has been conducting space research for quite a long time, which is why it will eventually give way on SDI research, but will do everything that it can to prevent deployment of any successful anti-ballistic missile system produced by the Americans.

This means that, in certain circumstances, the Soviets might risk a first strike, believing that they can absorb the American second strike because of their civil defence expenditure and the excellent provisions that they have for civil defence. As most of their launchers are re-usable, they could then make a third strike. This is why they are opposed to the SDI and an anti-ballistic missile system. No one would launch a nuclear attack in the knowledge that only a small percentage of their missiles would get through. That is only common sense.

If the Americans can put men on the moon, they will eventually find the answer to the ballistic missile. After all, this will protect Europe as well as America. If an ICBM is fired from central Russia, no one knows whether it will be directed at Washington, London or Paris, so if it is brought down at the boost stage, which is the easiest stage to attack it, both Europe and the United States will be protected from that missile.

The term "star wars" has been bandied about the House already, but this should refer to ASATS—anti-satellite satellites. SDI is quite a different matter. In ASATS, the Soviets are well ahead of the West, but SDI is a non-nuclear defence, which I should have thought would logically be supported by the Opposition and the CND if it were not for their anti-Americanism. It is neither destabilising nor decoupling. I agree with the right hon. Member for Devonport that whatever happens we must join in at the research and development stage.

A vast new technology will be provided from this research, continuing for the next few years. If Europe is not in it, it will become second class in all these important phases of advanced technology. We now have a real chance for co-operation because we can offer something.

[Sir Patrick Wall]

Europe is ahead in electro-optics and in some aspects of radar and particle beams. We can offer something in technological exchange with the United States. We must seize this opportunity.

I turn to economic strategy and I shall repeat to the House some of the words that I used in my presidential speech to the North Atlantic Assembly:

"We believe that it is increasingly evident that Alliance security is composed of three independent parts — political, military and economic. We have managed a broad consensus on the first two, but we have not even begun to approach consensus on economic strategy. NATO must have an effective resources strategy in spite of individual nationalism."

For 10 years, a sub-committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy), has been meeting the armed services committee of the House and the Senate in Washington. We have made some progress, but once the military industrial pressures are exerted on the American Government, progress becomes slower and slower.

I will give some examples of lack of Alliance economic strategy. First, we sell the Hawk to the United States for naval training but we buy Brazilian aircraft for RAF training and so lose major European orders for weapons systems. Secondly, we insist on building Nimrod AEW instead of participating in the NATO AWACS project, thereby losing millions of pounds. Thirdly, we go on talking about the European fighter aircraft, knowing that the French will sabotage the programme unless they get a major part in it. This has already happened with the Franco-German helicopters which the Germans will now get only in the mid-1990s, when they expected to get them in about three years.

NATO now has four main battle tanks—Challenger, Abrams, the MX and the Leopard 2. Any commander of NATO will say that he would take any one of the tanks, but only one and not four, with different weapon systems and different ammunition and all the supply difficulties that that will necessitate in time of war.

I will give two more examples. We have the best lightweight torpedo in the world in Sting Ray, which the United States navy will not touch. America is inventing its own advanced lightweight torpedo, which will not be ready until the mid-1990s. Meanwhile, they have obsolete lightweight, air-launched torpedoes for the rest of this decade.

Furthermore, I am told that our latest aircraft, the Tornado, cannot re-arm on German airfields, and that the German Tornados cannot re-arm on British airfields. I hope that this is not true, and I hope that this point will be dealt with in the winding-up speech.

No one can deny that an Alliance economic strategy is essential. Industry is prepared to co-operate, but European Governments—I am not talking about our Government —put nationalism first and may well lose world war 3 should it ever come about. At present, they are losing billions of pounds in duplicating research and development. As the Select Committee on Defence has pointed out, "structural disarmament" will play havoc with our forces in the next few years. All this is in spite of the fact that the NATO nations have a gross domestic product two and a half times that of the Warsaw pact. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already taken a number of steps in the right direction in trying to get an Alliance economic strategy, but I think that he will agree that the Alliance has still a long way to go.

On the maritime strategy, I am glad that the Government are maintaining their promise to continue a force of 50 frigates and destroyers, but that means that, with no reserves, only about 42 to 45 will be operational at any one time. As has been said, to keep a total of 50, three type 23s must be ordered each year. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has confirmed that this will be done, but when will it start? That is the key to the problem. We have not yet ordered the first of the type 23s. When will that be? Some say that it will be two years hence, and if that happens we cannot maintain the promised frigate force.

I have another question that would probably be better asked tomorrow. Why are we not ordering more Goalkeepers instead of the Vulcan Phalanx, particularly for the batch III type 42 destroyers? They have a greater range and are more effective than two Vulcan Phalanxes. I should like to see them in our aircraft carriers. As the Secretary of State will know, I have been pressing for years for Seawolf. I am very pleased that they will be in the type 23s, but I believe that our aircraft carriers still lack proper protection, and I should like to see Seawolf mounted on sponsons in our aircraft carriers.

Amphibious warfare ships had almost been phased out, and then came the Falklands campaign. Without Fearless and Intrepid, the Falklands campaign could not have been mounted. Those who are interested in amphibious warfare and know something about it have a right to be heard in this House. A decision on their replacement should be made this year. If a decision on replacing Fearless and Intrepid is not made this year, my fear is that there will be further procrastination. If the fears of hon. Members on each side of the House that there is to be retrenchment in defence expenditure are well-founded, we shall never get those replacement vessels, and that will be disastrous for maritime nations such as Britain. It will also be disastrous for NATO policy on the northern flank.

Some years ago, in answer to a question in this House, I was told that there are only three hards in northern Norway where roll-on, roll-off ferries can land, so we have to have amphibious ships to land Royal Marines or soldiers on the northern flank. I hope that my right hon. Friend will once again study the lessons of the 1940 conflict in that part of the world.

I suggest that the next five years will be dangerous years. Defence should not be cut but expanded; otherwise we and our children will suffer the consequences. Should we ever have the misfortune to have a Socialist Government again, it is clear from their amendment today that we would be out of NATO and well on the way to becoming a Soviet satellite.

6.21 pm

Mr. John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford): In one respect the House owes a debt to the hon. Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall). Despite my disagreement with his analysis, his speech, like the admirable speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), attempted to give us an overall strategic view, and the first day of the White Paper debate should in particular concentrate much more on that aspect.

I remember the Secretary of State, when I had the pleasure of shadowing him a little while ago, promising

that he would give us this year an overall philosophical commentary; he was not prepared to do it last year. I found it notably lacking in his speech today.

I shall start not with the future but with the past. Five weeks ago today we were celebrating the 40th anniversary of VE day, and inevitably those of us who took part in the second world war felt the stir of old memories. I remember that on VE day, when the Japanese launched a particularly violent kamikaze attack upon our ships in the Pacific war, my leading telegraphist, who had been listening to the BBC, turned to me and said, "Do you know, sir, it's a public holiday in England."

It is all very well to boast, as the defence White Paper does, that we have had over 40 years of peace in Europe. That, in a sense, is Europe's public holiday, but in a very real sense our public holiday has been paid for by turmoil in other continents.

In the White Paper, the first section, headed "Forty Years of Peace", says about the second world war:

"it had begun in Europe but engulfed the world."

Let us get our history right. The second world war effectively started in Asia, when the Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1932, and it spread to Africa when Ethiopia was invaded by Mussolini in 1935. The European engagement was the sequel to those acts of warfare in other parts of the world. If we look at things from that perspective, the boast of 40 years' peace becomes startlingly irrelevant.

Since the second world war there have been 140 armed conflicts in other continents, all of them continents in which the Third world dominates, and it does nobody any good to boast of our public holiday while the poor and the weak of other nations are paying the price for our complacency. Taken at any level, surrogate wars fought by the clients of the super-powers in the poorer parts of the world may yet escalate into life and death struggles by Europeans, just as the invasion of Manchuria by the Japanese empire led inexorably to the domination and destruction of Europe itself.

The peace of Europe has to rest on something much more than the relative strength of NATO or the Warsaw pact. Over 50 years ago, Winston Churchill warned:

"A United States of Europe might revive on a scale more terrible the rivalries from which we have suffered so cruelly in our own age. A day of fate and doom for men will dawn if ever the old quarrels of countries are superseded by the strife of continents."

Churchill's day of fate and doom has already arrived. It is so much part of our lives that the military strategists see it as a safe and stable system. It is not a healthy system; it is Orwell's 1984 in embryo. But the trend continues, assisted as it is by high technology. As the rivalries between the super-powers and their super-blocs become more intense, so too does the spread of the weapons of high technology to the Third world. It is not the technology of peace, of peaceful industrialisation, but the technology of warfare. In that, the clients of the super-powers can boast a scientific expertise unknown in history.

The tragedy is that the vast regional military alliances have not made the world more secure; they have contributed to the increasing danger in which all of us find ourselves. If we are to protect ourselves, every nation—particularly every small nation—in the world has to be protected, too. Therefore, there remains a role for the United Kingdom well outside NATO, not as an imperial power but as the friend and safeguard of smaller nations. But such a task is too great for one country alone. It is here that the United Nations should be playing a much fuller part. If it is not doing so, some of the responsibility must rest with us.

We have a tolerably good record, under successive Administrations, of response to United Nations' resolutions and requests. We have not so good a reputation in creative thinking or in assisting the United Nations to make the kind of change that Dag Hammerskjold, for example, would have wished.

Yet high technology today could be playing its part in giving the security that smaller nations require. The French, for example, are very keen on pressing forward the idea of UN surveillance satellite systems. They would have the beneficial effect of ending the monopoly powers of the United States and the Soviet Union. They would give even the smallest member of the United Nations the same access to satellite intelligence as is now available to the super-powers.

The tragic absurdity of the present position was well illustrated during the Falklands war. It is said that the United Kingdom was dependent for much of its intelligence upon the United States satellite intelligence, while at the same time the Soviet Union, with its own satellite military intelligence, was supplying the Fascist junta in Argentina. The same generous assistance is available for the clients of the super-powers in the Middle East, in Africa and in Asia—but only, of course, when the super-powers deem it wise to do so. This can have tragic consequences, most notably in the 1973 Middle East war.

Would the 1973 war have even started had not the Americans denied intelligence on Arab troop movements to the Israelis? Once started, it could certainly have been stopped sooner had President Sadat known the true position of Israeli forces in the Sinai. It was that ignorance that led him to turn down a peace proposal from Dr. Kissinger. The war continued and more men died.

It is time that, as part of our own defence policy, we were encouraging the United Nations to develop along the lines that the French have suggested. If such items of intelligence were available to all UN nations equally, the world could be spared many of its tragic conflicts, and the power of the super-powers cut down accordingly. But we should go further. We should be encouraging the provision of permanent United Nations peace-keeping forces to prevent all dangerous military developments and to take action when necessary.

As everybody knows, a peace-keeping force is envisaged in the charter itself. Of course, the apologists for the super-powers will tell us that it is not practical; that the Soviet Union and United States would be so fearful that UN forces would be used against them in their acts of aggression that they would veto any such proposal. The super-pessimists would add that the cost of keeping millions of men under arms is so high that none of the possible paymasters would be willing to foot the bill. In fact, the cost is much less than was originally envisaged, since we are talking about a relatively small force capable of rapid deployment for use in damping down the fires of small armed conflicts before they burn up a whole continent.

In this way, the Security Council veto becomes an important safeguard, since it enables the super-powers to feel that their existence is not threatened. Small forces of this kind could easily operate from strategic areas all over the world, including the Falklands, Belize, Gibraltar and

[Mr. John Silkin]

many other colonial and former colonial territories to which importance was first attached because of their strategic position but whose economic future is in doubt. Of course, this will not bring perpetual peace. As Thomas Jefferson said:

"An association of men who will not quarrel with one another is a thing which never yet existed, from the greatest confederacy of nations down to a town meeting or a vestry."

Quarrels do not have to lead to war, and it is with the elimination of war that defence is directly concerned.

Until the world is prepared to trust its own global institutions to preserve peace, nations will have to look at their own defences, either in concert with others or, where necessary, alone. Whether as a member of NATO or, in its global role, as part of the greatest association of nations — the Commonwealth — or in defence of its own territory, Britain must look to her maritime capability. It is here also that the defence White Paper is so worrying. In paragraphs 458, 459 and 460, the defence statement implies that our Merchant Navy is sufficient to meet all our defence needs. By studying the wording carefully, one sees that it is even doubtful that the Merchant Navy meets our NATO obligations. We have been told that an internal study began in 1984, although we have not been promised that the study will be published.

Could the magnificent part played by the Merchant Navy during the Falklands war be repeated 8,000 miles from our shores? Many of us doubt it. Could the Merchant Navy ever feed and supply this island in a prolonged war? Many of us doubt that too. We must remember that the highest rate of casualties of all the belligerent forces in world war 2 was suffered by the Merchant Navy—one in three did not come back alive. We ignore our Merchant Navy at our peril.

What applies to the Merchant Navy applies in equal measure to the fishermen; yet, of the five trawlers that took part in the Falklands war, only two now remain in British ownership. The statement says:

"with the exception of large deep-sea trawlers for MCM operations, there are sufficient ships in each category to meet our defence needs."

Even ignoring the conclusions of the Defence Committee's report, that is a pretty large exception.

I hope that Britain will play its part in leading the world to a saner and more peaceful future, but, whatever our future role may be — as a supporter of the United Nations, as a member of NATO, in defence of the Commonwealth or alone—it remains true today, as it always was, that our safety chiefly depends upon the men and ships of our country. That is what the Secretary of State for Defence has neglected, and therein lies the major weakness of the defence White Paper.

6.33 pm

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): The background to this debate are the Defence Estimates, in the massive, well-argued and well-written White Paper, and the third report of the Select Committee on Defence, chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins). My right hon. Friend and his colleagues have done the House a great service in their admirable analysis. I hope that I do not offend the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) by saying that he got the matter exactly right in pointing out that the financial questions raised by the third report must be answered. If there is one Secretary of State who is capable of handling this difficult matter and the escalation of costs, it is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. We wish him success.

Select Committees are very much at their best when they concentrate on the financial aspects of the Government's actions. If we who are privileged to be the representatives of the people wish to exercise some control over the Executive, we can do that best by concentrating on the financial results of the Executive's proposals. The fact that my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne and his colleagues have been concerned with this point is a healthy and admirable sign.

The speech of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) was muddled in the extreme. It must be difficult to be an Opposition spokesman on defence. Apart from that, the only part of the debate so far which I have not understood was what followed from the speech of the right hon. Member for Devonport. Again, I hope that I do not offend him by agreeing with him. I thought that much of what he said was cogent and important, but I fail to understand how he squares it with his alliance with the Liberal party. The SDP and the Liberal party seem to be not merely poles apart but worlds apart in their approach to defence. It was engaging to watch the right hon. Member for Devonport being cheered on by the assembled cohorts of the SDP—there are at least four of them here — while the Liberals behind him sat in embarrassed silence. While the alliance is divided on this important matter, I fail to understand how they can present themselves as an alternative Government or even, as they modestly beg to do, as possible partners in a political compromise at some time in the future.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Edward du Cann: The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak in a moment. We shall look forward to hearing him.

Mr. Ashdown: Give way.

Sir Edward du Cann: I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Ashdown: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. Will he cast the mote from his own eye? Does he not recognise that there are substantial differences within his party on defence—for example, the Conservative party is by no means united on the Trident issue. Does that not reveal significant problems within the Conservative party, from which he wishes to turn our attention? Will he recognise that the differences between the SDP and the Liberal party on defence are significantly fewer than the differences in either of the other two parties?

Sir Edward du Cann: I hoped, by refusing to give way immediately, to save the hon. Gentleman from making an ass of himself. There are no differences in the Conservative party with regard to defence. We agree with the right hon. Member for Devonport that it is appropriate to examine alternatives. Of course all the options must be considered all the time. It is the business of government to be pragmatic, to be ready to examine alternatives if necesary. The Liberal party wants unilateral disarmament——

Mr. Ashdown: Nonsense.

Sir Edward du Cann: —and the SDP properly professes that Britain should be sensibly defended. The conflicts between the two parties are vast. It is no good pretending otherwise.

Like the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin), I wish to make two points. One is a local point, to which the first report of the Select Committee on Defence referred—by a curious irony that report was published after the Select Committee's third report—and the other is an international matter. The first point relates to the Merchant Navy. The substantial and continuing decline in the British merchant fleet puts the British economy, in peace as well as in wartime, in deadly peril. I believe that action to remedy the position is overdue and urgently needed.

In paragraphs 458, 459 and 460, the defence White Paper made three important statements on the Merchant Navy. It said that a continued reduction in the fleet's size "could" endanger our ability to fulfil our NATO obligations. As the right hon. Member for Deptford said, that commitment is in jeopardy today. The White Paper stated:

"with the exception of large deep-sea trawlers for MCM operations, there are sufficient ships in each category to meet our defence needs."

I believe that statement to be, at best, highly questionable and, at worst, untrue. The United Kingdom fleet consisted of 686 ships at the end of last February. Ten years ago, at the end of 1975, there were 1,600 ships. The deadweight tonnage last February was 18 million. Ten years ago it was 50 million. The latest bulletin of the General Council for British Shipping states:

"no major change is seen in the rate of decline in the United Kingdom fleet, which, since 1978, has been about 100 ships per annum."

In wartime, the merchant fleet has special tasks. Apart from bringing to the UK essential cargoes—energy, food and raw materials—it has other duties, such as the reinforcement and resupply of our forces, the need to provide ships for special military tasks in support of the Royal Navy and as, as they say, "forces' multipliers" to add to the Navy's strength. There are also auxiliary tasks. If there were a conflict, heavy losses would have to be made good. They have been estimated at between 40 and 50 per cent. initially.

In terms of numbers of ships, tonnages and classes of vessels, what is required can easily be quantified. Thus, we are speaking of facts; we are not dealing in abstruse calculations. We can calculate easily and quickly what we need and what we have, and the conclusion is inescapable. In wartime, Britain would have too few ships to support a war economy and supply and reinforce our forces.

I have not commented on the shortage of seafarers, of personnel. The present total of those at sea is about 40,000. In 1939, the year war broke out, the number was four times that, about 159,000. The number of trained officers and men going ashore has now reached 5,000 a year. Again, this is fact, and it is much to be regretted. So, even if the required number of ships could be found—say, by requisition, charter or purchase—there is the gravest doubt whether sufficient numbers of trained men would be available to man them, and shortly we shall have no reserves of manpower.

An immediate matter was referred to by the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford. If there were, next week, another Falklands conflict—which we pray there will not be—it is unlikely, as the right hon. Gentleman said, that Britain could find the merchant ships necessary. This morning's *Lloyd's List* contains news of another old Falklands ship being sold. That is a measure of the recent decline in our country's maritime strength, and it is continuing.

Inadequacy in time of conflict is serious enough. In peacetime the implications are equally horrendous. Employment in the industry, as I have illustrated, continues to fall. There is a smaller contribution to the balance of payments than there should be—currently £1 billion a year, with import savings in addition, although that is not a small sum by any means.

Employment in associated industries is increasingly at risk. Insurance, charter, through the Baltic, engineering, ship design, ship repair, shipbuilding and electronics are all involved. Worst of all, British exporters and importers are now increasingly dependent on their competitors' fleets.

The White Paper's third important statement affecting the Merchant Navy was that factual studies into the situation would be completed this summer. It repeated, in effect, what the Minister of State said in a debate on the Royal Navy on 29 November last year, as many hon. Members now present will recall. How is that study progressing and when will it be completed?

I hope that my right hon. Friend will agree what Ministers so far have not been willing to agree, that when it is available it should be published. The subject is of such importance that we need the widest possible debate on it so that we may propose remedies. If my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne and his colleagues could produce this admirable document in a matter of weeks, I do not see why we should have to wait any time for the Government's report to be ready. The situation is so grave that, as I have suggested to her, the Prime Minister should appoint a single Minister to oversee the present situation and to propose remedies.

What is so worrying about my right hon. Friend's Select Committee report is that it discloses a complete lack of clarity and purpose on the part of Ministers. It appears that this subject has been relegated not just to the second or third division but to the fifth or sixth division. It should be brought up to the first division.

The report finally refers to

"the risk to national security inherent in loss of independence in the carriage of seaborne commerce."

It suggests that it would be dangerous should this country become vulnerable, because that would be a temptation to a would-be aggressor. It states:

"The striking contrast between British, and indeed Allied, maritime resources and those of the Warsaw Pact countries, in inverse proportion to the relative dependence of each alliance on sea communication, is extremely disturbing".

I am surprised that my right hon. Friend used such moderate language because, as the White Paper points out, the Soviets have moved from being a coastal to a blue water force. The Soviets have now overtaken Britain and the United States as a merchant shipping power. In the early 1970s, the United Kingdom had about twice the merchant shipping of the Soviet Union. By the 1990s, the Soviet fleet will be twice the size of the merchant fleet of the United Kingdom, and all those serving in it will be auxiliaries for the Soviet navy. The situation is extremely serious and we must deal with it. To paraphrase what Churchill said in another context, we need and shall demand action this year.

[Sir Edward du Cann]

There is a parallel with the state of the merchant fleet in the deplorable state of the British air cargo industry, in which I have an interest, which I have previously declared to the House. I have raised the subject on a previous occasion. I never understand why it takes us so long to see what is going wrong with our merchant fleet and appreciate our lack of carriers in the air. On a parallel point, I hope that my right hon. Friend will ensure that an early decision is made about the Army's need for helicopters. Westlands is badly in need of work. In addition, it has the ideal solution in the W30 helicopter. I hope that my right hon. Friend will see that an early decision is made about that, too.

The other main point that I wish to raise also parallels what the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford said. It concerns the nuclear threat to peace. The right hon. Gentleman was right to say that large conflicts often begin from smaller incidents in faraway places which we in this country may not take too seriously. He was also right to point out the great dangers that derive when surrogate wars are being fought. The Soviets do that all the time, particularly in Africa. Angola is a notable example. One could give others.

Much popular anxiety relates to the apparently implacable positions of East and West—indeed, that is the theme of the White Paper — with the tyrants confronting those who live in freedom and who are prepared to defend it. My right hon. Friend spent much of his speech on that point. Most attention, therefore, is focused on negotiations between the Soviets and the West for limitations or reductions in the nuclear strength of both, and it is right that that should be the case.

At the extreme end of the argument there are those who propose that our country should unilaterally abandon its nuclear defences altogether. The Liberal party does that, apparently. There is a precedent in contemporary experience, for this argument. We had it during the time of Hitler's rise to power in the years before 1939, with frightful consequences. There was, among other factors, the expressed longing of the British people for peace, of which one could give many examples—the notorious Oxford debate, the Fulham by-election in 1933. That longing for peace, though honourable, undoubtedly led the Nazis to believe that they would be safe in pursuing aggression in the Ruhr, Austria and Czechoslovakia and that there would be no opposition in Europe. Our inaction, as we now know, was a fearful error. The White Paper is right to remind us of a lesson that too many people are ready to forget. I hope with all my heart that we have learned that lesson.

I believe that, just as the use of the nuclear weapon in 1945 shortened the war against Japan, to which the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford referred, and saved many tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of British, American, Australian, allied and Japanese lives, so the possession of nuclear weapons by East and West has kept the world safe, in most of my adult lifetime, from serious conflict. That point was made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, and I agree with it. I do not believe that their possession by East and West —even though their stockpiling is worrying—has made conflict more likely. The chief threat, in my view, lies elsewhere and it is high time that we gave it more attention. It lies, in a word, in proliferation.

What are the facts? The spread of nuclear technology since 1945 has been extensive and it is continuing unchecked. Five countries are known to possess nuclear weapons: Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and China. However, there are commercial nuclear power reactors—about 350 of them—in 26 countries. More than 50 nations have nuclear research facilities. Perhaps a dozen countries can physically reprocess nuclear fuels; that is, they have the capacity to produce the materials needed to make nuclear devices. The areas involved are often potentially, in conflict terms, the most volatile: Pakistan and India, to which the right hon. Member for Llanelli referred, Iraq and Israel, and Libya, for example. Inevitably, too, there is the lurking spectre of the nuclear terrorist. It is to this developing and fearsome scene that I believe that we should now give our careful attention in the nuclear debate.

The United Nations sponsored nuclear non-proliferation treaty of 1968, mentioned in the White Paper, expires in 1995. It will be discussed in Geneva in the autumn of this year by almost 100 countries. It must be renewed. The inspection apparatus of the International Atomic Energy Authority needs urgent reinforcement. That strengthening must be made available and confidence in its competence, which at present seems to be much lacking, restored.

The whole purpose of the expenditure which these Estimates represent is the maintenance of peace. The influence and experience that, as the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford suggested, we possess in our country and which this House, broadly speaking, endorses, should not only be used for the physical defence of these shores—that is the conventional understanding of defence — but must be used more widely and constructively to curtail proliferation of the nuclear capability and to control it.

I hope that the work that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is doing will provide the foundation upon which the Government can build and take the initiative in what I believe to be as important a matter as any that has to be discussed, decided and acted upon by this House.

6.54 pm

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): The right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) will forgive me if I do not deal with his speech in detail, but I was extremely interested in the amount of time that he devoted to the Merchant Navy. He was right to do so. If I understood the right hon. Gentleman correctly, he suggested to the Treasury Bench that it was high time that we as a maritime nation had a maritime policy and a maritime Minister. If he did, he has my full support as he prods his Government from time to time. I wish more power to his already powerful elbow.

I begin my contribution to the debate by quoting from the personal message I gave my constituents in Newcastle upon Tyne, North during the last general election campaign:

"The awful prospect of a nuclear holocaust appals every thinking person. We must, in concert with our allies, work towards multilateral disarmament, nuclear and non nuclear. We simply cannot afford to embark on the Trident missile programme costed at 1981 prices at ten thousand million pounds, which, with the enormous escalation of sophisticated weapons systems, I know from my experience, will cost no less than 50 per cent. more, long before the system is ready for use. The only

way in which we could afford such a programme would be to deny the British Army of the Rhine the weapons they would need should the unthinkable war in Europe happen. Equally, the Royal Navy, on which we rely to keep the Western approaches and the Northern Atlantic open to our merchantmen, would have to be run down as indeed the Tories intended prior to the Falklands War. Had Argentina stayed her hand for a few brief months, the planned naval rundown would have already gone so far as to make the action we rightly took, impossible to carry out."

I do not retract one word of my message two years ago to my constituents on Trident. It was prophetic, because the escalation in cost to which I then referred was achieved in 24 months. Nobody can say that as a prophet I was exaggerating. My prediction of an increase in cost of over 50 per cent. before Trident comes into use has already been proved to be very much of an underestimate. The final increase in cost will be much nearer 100 per cent., or £20 billion, I stand firmly by everything that I said in 1983. The third report of the Select Committee on Defence heavily underlines all the points that I made to my constituents in 1983. I am more than delighted that my 1983 statement on defence issues has been supported by such an august body as the Select Committee on Defence. The whole House is indebted to it for the excellence of its report.

In its reports, the Select Committee states that there is the gravest possible threat that our conventional defence forces will be weakened if this Government continue down the lunatic road towards the deployment of a nuclear weapons system that we cannot hope to sustain within the constraints of our defence budget. And constraints there are. I am sure that, like each of his predecessors, the Secretary of State for Defence is only too painfully aware of these constraints. Apart from the perils of inflation for the defence budget there is, as he knows, the added burden of defence inflation which applies in full measure not only to the Trident programme but to all of the sophisticated equipment that is needed by our troops in the field.

That problem worries me most of all because, as I have said many times in defence debates, the sharp end for the British forces will be the central German plain. Our prime duty is to provide our forces there with the quality and quantity of hardware and software that they will need to ensure, by their own defence, the holding of that part of the front, which is so vital for the defence of Western Europe. That is where any conflict will take place, and that is where our commitment should be emphasised.

Therefore, why should we risk our forces by committing an ever-increasing amount of our limited defence budget to pursuing the Trident system, whose major purpose is to send American defence contractors laughing all the way to the bank? British contractors will get precious little from the thousands of millions of pounds that will be spent on the programme.

Naval orders will have a great influence on the well-being of many of my constituents employed by British Shipbuilders. I am anxious to know how, when and where those orders will be placed, and how the orders will be used. I must ask bluntly—I hope that the Minister who will reply to the debate will take this point on board—whether orders will be used to make some yards attractive to private investors for what I would call the Prime Minister's obsession—privatisation. Conversely, will the denial of orders be used to decide which yards will be set up for closure? The Secretary of State has the power of life or death over shipbuilding communities, as Mr. MacGregor does over coal-mining communities. The Secretary of State frightens me, because he is essentially southern-based and does not see much further than Potters Bar or, to be fair to him, British Aerospace at Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City.

I have said in the House previously that shipyards such as those on the Tyne, not least Swan Hunter, cannot survive without significant naval orders. I hope that the Secretary of State will, in reaching decisions in the future, remember that the north-east of England has largely been bled to death by the Government's policies. Those decisions will determine the future of or continuance of shipbuilding on the Tyne.

I should say something about President Reagan's star wars—the strategic defence initiative. To his credit, the Foreign Secretary quickly saw the dangers in undermining arms talks between East and West but, sadly, since "Her Parliamentary Majesty" has now spoken, Britain will back the President in research into star wars. Nothing could be more calculated to signal a move into another major arms race, which is not the way to world peace. With all the horror of the Third world, which we have seen on our television screens with monotonous regularity in recent months—the starvation of many thousands of children in Africa—there is a greater need than ever for nation to speak unto nation with a determination to find a way to break the lunacy of ever-increasing expenditure on arms. We must progressively, in tandem, reduce the burdens of armaments on East and West so that we may make progress on the road to a world where the constant fear of war no longer prevails.

7.4 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I am glad that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) is still in the Chamber, because I owe him an apology. We all know him as the inventor of the wheel and the holder of the original patent on sliced bread, but of course we should not laugh at him, and I am sorry that I was moved to do so during his speech. When he mentioned being in a serious ball park, I asked one of my hon. Friends sitting beside me, "What does one talk about in a serious ball park?" His answer was so apposite and humorous that I had to laugh out loud. The right hon. Gentleman will probably work out what my hon. Friend's reply was, and I am sure that my hon. Friends will get there presently.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) told us of his doubts about the adequacy of the British merchant fleet to meet the strains that might be put on it in time of war, as well as the obligations and opportunities to which it must respond in time of peace. I understand and accept that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State could not reply today to the report of the Select Committee on Defence. I also know some of the reasons for the decline to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton drew attention. They include the deliberate policy adopted for many years by the Eastern bloc of trying to steal our trade; the activities of previous Governments in lending money to Eastern bloc and Third world countries so that they could buy ships to undercut our merchant fleet; and all the other pressures, including the 40-40-20 policy. I am not sure that the decline is reversible. It would be interesting to know what it might cost to reverse it.

Against that background, we must consider maritime re-supply in time of war. The alternative of pre-positioning food and fuel for the civil population as well as of warlike

[Mr. Cranley Onslow]

stores for our forces must be examined, and we should also consider the priority of airlifting many of the stores that we need. I hope that when the Department has received its consultants' report and when Ministers report to the House on it, they will take those points into account, because they may open the way for the redeployment of scarce naval surface resources that we have available in the north Atlantic.

Whatever happens with re-supply, it is essential that our home base should remain inviolate. Home defence is enormously important. I was glad to see in the White Paper that exercise Brave Defender will be held this September, in which our home defence forces will be tested. I hope that as many Members of Parliament as possible will be invited to witness that exercise. I am far from certain that our home defence resources are adequate. I do not know how many vital installations we have, but I suspect that there are enough to tax the 100,000 regulars and reservists whom we are told we have available, let alone the 65,000 of them who will take part in the exercise.

I hope that the Government are serious when they say that they are considering the possible expansion of the Home Service Force, which at present has only 5,000 members. That really is not enough. If the Select Committee were to examine the matter, I suspect that it would discover that, in the words of my right hon. Friend the member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins), plenty of people in Britain regard defence as "everyone's business", and would be prepared to give up some of their time voluntarily to release our invaluable regular service men and women for other tasks and to strengthen our ability to keep the home base secure.

The reasons why we must do that are admirably set out in paragraph 410 of the White Paper, which states:

"The importance of defending the United Kingdom goes beyond even the fundamental need to protect our own country and its people. . . it is therefore in the interests of the whole Alliance that we should be capable of deterring such an offensive or, if it were launched, of defending ourselves and our territorial waters against attack."

We must have adequate home defence.

The Labour party's policy would destroy the Alliance and thus make home defence irrelevant. The policy is well expressed in the following terms: we have an Opposition who are committed

"to outright unilateral disarmament. The United States is to be kicked out of our aircraft bases and ports in the UK which they have been using as part of our NATO commitment to the nuclear deterrent."

I am paying the right hon. Member for Devonport the compliment of quoting from a document which seems to have been circulated by the SDP to most of the 14-year-olds in my constituency. It is rather like some of the circulars householders get on solar heating—superficially convincing, but not at all strong on costs. But that is the SDP's policy in a nutshell.

Two things emerge from what the right hon. Gentleman said. First, it is impossible to envisage the SDP combining with the Labour party in a hung Parliament. It is also wholly impossible for the right hon. Gentleman or his hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) to pretend that there is not an enormous divide within the so-called alliance on the question of defence. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman is not too clear about what he himself wants. He simply throws a whole lot of options in the air—some serious balls, if I can put it that way—even though he knows that they are all dismissible. For example, there is the question of continuing with Polaris or converting our submarines to cruise. The right hon. Gentleman never quantifies or costs these things. He just tosses them in the air. In so doing he displays the same kind of naivety that runs through so much of the SDP's approach to often serious matters.

For instance, on the Falklands, the document from which I have already quoted states:

"the SDP believes that the Government should bring an end to the spending of hundreds of millions of pounds on Fortress Falklands and should open a dialogue with the new democratic government of Argentina."

And if they did, it would be from a position of utter weakness. Just about the same strength is inherent in that position as there would be if we went to the French and said, "May we please you join you in your M5 missile?" That is an incredibly naive and unsustainable approach to such serious matters. When people consider what the SDP has to offer, I hope they will realise that solar heating might actually be a better bargain.

There is one final matter that I hope the Government have understood. It is the RAF that is responsible for the air defence of the United Kingdom—not the French air force. If we are to purchase a replacement aircraft for our air force, it must match our needs. Such a purchase should not be dictated by the siren claims of European collaboration or the ambitions of the French aircraft industry in the field of international sales. We need an aircraft that suits the RAF, and a British design must be best.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I should have reminded the House that the 10-minute rule is operating until 8.50 pm.

7.11 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The White Paper was right to refer to the fact that it is 40 years since the end of the second world war. I mention that because it seems that the strategic attitude of the Government, the United States and the western Alliance is automatically to assume that the only enemy in the world is the Soviet Union.

Since my youth I have never agreed with the internal regime in the Soviet Union. I have protested probably more than most hon. Members about the internal suppression of those in the Soviet Union who want to create free and independent trade unions and institutions and wish to see democracy in that country. I was probably the first Labour Member to protest about what happened when the Soviet Union moved into Afghanistan. I protested about Hungary and Czechoslovakia. I shall continue to make it absolutely clear that the internal regime in the Soviet Union has nothing whatever in common with democratic Socialism. Indeed, it is the very antithesis of what we believe in.

The commemoration of 40 years of peace has stirred old memories. I was very young when I joined the RAF. During my four years in that service I spent 18 months with the United States 8th Army Air Corps. I wish to make it clear that today we are able honestly to debate and argue our points of view because of the deaths that unfortunately occurred during the war. As well as our own people, 20

million Russians died. We must never forget that, nor should we forget the devastation that took place in that country.

We must never forget that their cities were razed to the ground, that whole areas were overrun by the Nazis and that the Russian people were subjected to untold horrors. We must never forget that millions of Russian people were sent to the various prisons and concentration camps. We therefore owe a debt to those people in the Soviet Union who fought so hard to enable us to be free.

At the end of the war the Soviet Union became obsessed with security. It created buffer states, suppressed the democracy that was beginning to develop in many of those countries, and has expanded in other directions since—all because of its obsession with security and the belief that never again will 20 million Russian people be destroyed.

There is now a new leader in the Soviet Union. Some say that he is a hard-liner, while others say that he is a soft-liner. I do not know. Indeed, it is difficult for any of us to know. When Khrushchev took over as leader—and he was not a democrat—he began to open the doors of the prison camps. He also made it clear that the Stalinist regime was not acceptable for the future. There are those who would like to return to Stalinism, but my point is that we cannot continue in the way that has been suggested by some hon. Members who say that the Soviet Union is the enemy and should be more or less destroyed. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

In the event of a nuclear war there will be no winners. We shall all be losers. Arthur Koestler said that when the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the character of war changed totally and that from then on we were talking of the possibility of war which would destroy the world. That is the prospect with which we are now faced, and that is what we must understand. That must be borne in mind when we discuss our defence policy.

I agree with those hon. Members who have said that we must have genuine defence. I am not a pacifist. I believe in genuine defence. Those who believe that nuclear weapons are the only means of maintaining peace are honest in that belief, but they should accept that others who believe that we should get rid of nuclear weapons are equally honest. We are not Soviet agents or subversives. We simply believe that so long as nuclear weapons exist and we do nothing to get rid of them, we shall build them up until one day some idiot will push the button, and that will be the end of society for ever. All our ideological discussion about capitalism and Socialism or whether we are Christians or Moslems or anything else will mean nothing. That is why we argue our policy as we do.

The document setting out the policy carried at last year's Labour party conference states:

> "We are also committed to the unconditional removal of all US nuclear weapons and nuclear bases from British soil and British waters . . . Labour will therefore take appropriate action to ensure that the US Government removes its nuclear weapons and nuclear delivery systems from British territory and British territorial waters."

We are then accused of wanting to sell out to the Soviet Union and become a satellite of Russia, but that is not so. We are saying that we must begin somewhere to get rid of nuclear weapons. It would be marvellous if, at the international level, the great powers could sit down and agree that from tomorrow all nuclear weapons will be abolished, but as the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) has said, that is not likely to happen—what is happening is proliferation.

Somebody somewhere must begin the process of removing nuclear weapons. That is why my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and I raised the issue of NATO. *[Interruption.]* It is difficult to argue a case properly when one is limited to 10 minutes. How many minutes do I have left? [HON. MEMBERS: "One."] There is a contradiction about our policy and if we carry it through we shall undoubtedly run into difficulties with the United States and our allies in NATO, but we must face that fact because we must try to change NATO policy. If NATO policy cannot be changed, in the end we shall have to come out of NATO. In the process we must try to start to get rid of nuclear weapons so that our world, our grandchildren and their grandchildren will have a future. If we do not do that, there will be no future.

7.22 pm

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) as my own comments will follow exactly the line that he followed. I am fully conscious of the difficulty of comparing forces as between the Warsaw pact and NATO. It is not easy to compare weapon with weapon. Nevertheless, by any standards the Warsaw pact forces are superior to those of NATO. We can make all possible allowances for Russia's traditional sensitivity about being encircled by potential enemies. We can make allowances for the fact that a staggering 20 million Soviet citizens were killed in the last war and for that country's determination that that should never befall it again. We can also make allowances for the technical superiority which still exists in many sectors of the NATO forces. After allowing for all those factors, however, the preponderance of military might in the Warsaw pact cannot realistically be attributed to self-defence. The threat is there and it is real.

It is generally assumed that an attacker needs three times the forces of the defender to be successful in an attack and the Warsaw pact is within that range in a number of key areas such as tactical aircraft, tanks and artillery. NATO does not need parity. We have said time and again that none of our forces will ever by used except in response to attack. Nevertheless, we need to be near enough to the one-to-three relationship to be certain that we shall not be attacked and that there is no risk of our forces being underestimated. We cannot safely let the balance swing too far away from us. I therefore support the Government's action in increasing our spending by 3 per cent. per year in line with NATO targets, which we have achieved through to this year. I also strongly support the commitment to NATO by the United States in the deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe and I support the continuation of the independent nuclear deterrent through the purchase of Trident.

A great deal of the sometimes rather fruitless dialogue about peace and how to achieve it stems from the fact that many people misunderstand the nature of peace and talk as though peace were something for which we should strive. I give a short but telling quotation from Henry Kissinger. He said:

> "Many people seem to regard peace as a kind of terminal state in which nations live in harmony and the need for further effort

[Mr. Peter Viggers]

disappears." Unfortunately this conception doesn't correspond to the reality. In our time peace is a process not a condition. There are no final happy endings."

That is important, because so often people who campaign for peace seem to project peace as though it were some kind of secret, enchanted garden to which they alone have the key. The reality is quite different. Peace is what we have now. It may be a rather unhappy peace, but peace it is and we must work to maintain that measure of stability.

Maintaining peace is a time-consuming, expensive and frustrating activity requiring patience, skill and the avoidance of provocative acts. The true peace campaigners who keep the peace for us are the men and women of our armed forces. We are at peace, but various factors could destabilise the situation. I shall identify three of them.

The first is Russian militarism. I have already referred to the weight of the Warsaw pact forces, but the disturbing fact is that recently they have been growing much more rapidly. The deployment of SS20 missiles in Europe left NATO no alternative but to proceed with its dual track decision in 1979 and to deploy cruise and Pershing missiles. Cruise missiles are a symbol of American determination to support NATO rather than a matching of missile for missile. Russia must surely also realise, and the hon. Member for Walton must realise, that launching a new submarine every five weeks when Russia has no maritime routes to protect cannot be regarded otherwise than as an offensive act and something from which the Soviet Union should desist.

As the hon. Member for Walton said, we are all heartened by the appearance of Mr. Gorbachev as the Russian leader. His interest in industrial and civilian matters in this country was encouging, but there have been no signs of any change in ideology and it may be asking too much to expect that. What we can perhaps hope and negotiate for is a reduction in the military manifestations of that idealogy, and I believe that that is entirely appropriate.

Recently I had the honour to attend a conference on disarmament convened in Mexico City by the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union at which most of the leading nations of the world were represented. I was surprised to see how few friends Russia had among the non-aligned countries. It is bereft of friends, apart from those countries which are politically subservient to it. That should be encouraging to us as a democracy and it should give Russia cause for thought.

The second destabilising factor is identified in the public mind as the strategic defence initiative, star wars. The United States and Russia are both working on new technology, but the media concentrate on the American efforts. Russia has the world's only operational anti-ballistic missile system, which defends the Soviet civil and military command authorities around Moscow. Russia has also been proceeding with a much larger high-energy laser programme than the United States, with about 10,000 scientists and engineers working at six research establishments, and Russia has developed prototype laser weapons. Moreover, 80 per cent. of Russian space launches are purely military. The United States and the United Kingdom cannot stand aside from this new technology.

I support completely the considered and thoughtful line taken by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary in his major speech on this subject. I should like to add only that the strategic defence initiative is defensive as regards ballistic missiles and it may have many other applications which do not relate to nuclear and ballistic weapons. I anticipate that the strategic defence initiative will throw up a great deal of technology which will be extremely useful with conventional military weapons.

The third destabilising factor is those who work from within the country to weaken our defences. Some people who are concerned with pacifist issues and anti-nuclear campaigning are non-political, though any person of independent mind would be disturbed to find so many Communists and Trotskyists working within the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and allied activities. CND is active in trade unions, churches, schools and local government.

There are many examples of local government activity, such as the development of nuclear-free zones, which are hostile to the basic thrust of our defence strategy. I could quote many examples, some of which are trivial and others which are frivolous. For example, South Yorkshire county council has erected 21 nuclear-free zone boundary signs at a cost of £100 per sign, and Sheffield city council sent a councillor and two officers by air to an international conference on nuclear-free zones in Cordoba, Spain. Such activity goes on throughout Europe and I therefore welcome the fact that the North Atlantic Assembly is considering means of stepping up our information services in NATO so that people in NATO can see the importance of the defence effort put in on their behalf.

I was impressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) who spoke about the total defence concept in Norway and Sweden, where everyone is responsible for defence. We do not have such a policy but we cannot afford to relax when so many of our citizens undermine the main thrust of our defence effort. I believe that we are winning the battle, but we cannot afford to be complacent.

7.32 pm

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): I am extremely grateful for being called. I do not intend to delay the House for long and I apologise for raising an industrial procurement matter. I am lucky to have a chance to speak at all.

I want to talk about the European fighter aircraft, which decision is due next week, or ought to be. There are several constraints on its development. First, there is an in-service date requirement of 1995 for the Royal Air Force and other European air forces. Unless the go-ahead is given very soon, we shall not meet that in-service date. The letter sent to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by companies in various industries suggesting that the European staff target would be met does not meet the agreement of many in the British aerospace industry. I hope that he will consider that carefully and take advice from the British aerospace industry, as he has done till now.

Secondly, there will be a threat to jobs if the fighter aircraft project does not go ahead. There will also be a threat to the continuity of the British aerospace industry if we do not get something working swiftly. I refer not simply to my area and the rest of Lancashire but to the whole of the United Kingdom.

The third constraint concerns sub-contractors who must look to their future interests. They are already faced with the prospect of having to take bilateral decisions to involve themselves in contracts to ensure their future. That would damage the strength of the consortium which hopes to gain the European fighter aircraft project go-ahead.

The fourth constraint is French intransigence. I have raised this matter many times in the House and do not apologise for doing so again. Their lack of interest is clear from the evidence that is available to those who take an interest in these matters. I recently went to Munich and was at the Paris air fair last week, where I was able to talk to people in the industry and the armed services, all of whom believe that the French are being deliberately intransigent and are not interested in getting involved in the project. The French have recently suggested to the armaments directors that there should be an evaluation of a navy version, which would delay discussion for yet another six months or so and enable them to demand more than their fair share of the jobs.

I have a copy of a document, circulated at the Paris air show, from the French trade unions which states:

"This is why the Federation of Metal Workers, CGT and all of the Unions in the French Aeronautical and Avionic Industries demand that the future defence aircraft be manufactured entirely from products currently under construction by various French Companies."

The document continues with a diatribe against the British aerospace industry and European industry as a whole. That confirms my information that French industry does not want to be involved in the project.

We are not being intransigent or chauvinistic. Although we have the fallback of the P-120, which will be a British version, with our European colleagues—West Germany, Italy, Spain and perhaps the Netherlands and Belgium—we are offering to build an aeroplane which we would like the French to be involved in. We want the French to be involved, provided that they recognise that they must come in on equal terms and share the work fairly. If they are not prepared to do that—they have shown that they are not—we must be prepared, with our partners, to tell the French at next week's meeting in London that the French can join us or stop mucking us about. We need a decision, and swiftly.

We must bring pressure to bear at a political level on West Germany. It is clear from my information that the West German industry is extremely keen to continue its involvement along the lines of Panavia and MTU, which have been responsible for manufacturing the Tornado and the engine for it. The industry has already said that, unless a decision is taken in July, it will have to make further decisions and involve itself in further discussions with American industry. There are already discussions with Northrop and Rockwell about the possibility of fulfilling their requirement. That must not happen, so we must persuade the West German Government to commit themselves to us, as they have until now, and to persuade the French to participate. If they do not, they must be told next week that time has run out.

We must have a commitment next week and the project must get off the ground as soon as possible. I am grateful for this chance to emphasise the strength of the anxieties.

7.37 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I should like to concentrate on disarmament issues. The first page of the Defence Estimates says:

"Given the present scale of NATO's defences, we have no reason to believe that Soviet leaders have any immediate intention of attacking NATO countries; but we cannot ignore the fact that those same leaders continue to improve the Soviet capability for such an attack."

There will be broad agreement that the Soviet Union does not intend to attack Western Europe. In the main, I agree with the analysis of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), who described how the Soviet Union extended its hegemony over Eastern Europe through military force.

It will also be common ground that we cannot base our defence policy on our view of Soviet intentions. We must base it on Soviet capability. However, that also applies to the United States. We must consider how the Soviet Union perceives the United States — as the most powerful military power in the world, especially in terms of nuclear technology. It is ringed with nuclear weapons in Europe and nuclear weapons are being developed in China.

We must understand the Soviet leadership's attitude in terms of that country's history, which my hon. Friend the Member for Walton described, and in terms of the huge military arsenal with which it is confronted. The Reagan Administration was elected on a ticket of massively expanding the United States's military budget. The nuclear arms race has been tremendously exaggerated by the United States. In November 1983, the CIA said that it had exaggerated the increase in the Soviet Union's military capability. More recently, in 1985, it acknowledged that it had overestimated the increase in the Soviet Union's military capability.

We have seen the destabilising development of nuclear weapons systems. In reply to a question from the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) — this is referred to in the evidence of the Select Committee on Defence which was published yesterday—the Secretary of State said that the policy of mutually assured destruction had been of incalculable value. However, that policy was not planned. It was one at which the two super-powers arrived. That policy has long since been undermined by technology—for example, the development of accurate counter-force weapons, which by definition are first-strike weapons. As counter-force weapons such as the Trident D5 system have undermined the deterrence element in mutually assured destruction, so is the strategic defence initiative enormously destabilising.

I assert categorically that there is a consensus of leading scientists and physicists in the United States who do not believe that it will be possible to achieve the SDI's ultimate objective of complete protection for the United States population from the Soviet Union's ICBMs. What is more likely to be attained in a decade or two is an imperfect system of protection basically for United States missiles. This involves a further element of destabilisation, at least in the transition phase. That is why we must recognise that the strategic defence initiative, as perceived by the Soviet Union, represents a dangerous escalation of the nuclear arms race.

Many prominent members of the Reagan Administration are on record as opposed to arms control. In the main, the record of that Administration has been one of opposition to arms control. What has been the record of the British Government? It gives me no pleasure to say that anyone looking objectively at what the Government have done in this area over the past five years cannot describe their actions as anything but deeply depressing.

[Mr. Gavin Strang]

First, Britain has been at the forefront in Europe in supporting Reagan's escalation of the nuclear arms race. The White Paper refers to the partial test ban treaty that was negotiated by Lord Stockton. The stance of Lord Stockton must be contrasted with that of the Prime Minister. In December, she described herself as President Reagan's greatest fan. She went to the United States and gave strong support to the star wars policy.

What is our record in the United Nations? I have a document which sets out the voting records of the various member countries last December on nuclear disarmament issues. In the limited time at my disposal I shall take only a couple of examples. Resolution 39/52 is headed:

"Cessation of all test explosions of nuclear weapons".

The resolution begins:

"Convinced that there are adequate existing verification measures to ensure compliance with a nuclear-test ban and that the alleged absence of verification means is nothing but an excuse for nuclear proliferation".

That was carried by 112 votes to three with 23 abstentions. It is no surprise to learn that the United Kingdom was one of the three member countries who opposed the resolution. The document from which I am quoting shows that that was frequently the case.

I shall give one more example. Resolution 39/61 is headed:

"Implementation of the Declaration of the denuclearisation of Africa."

The resolution includes the words:

"Appeals to all States that have the means to do so to monitor South Africa's research on, and development and production of nuclear weapons, and to publicise any information in that regard."

The resolution was carried by 147 votes with five abstentions. Again, the United Kingdom was one of the member countries which abstained. At the same time, the Government call themselves multilateralists.

The current disarmament talks are referred to and listed in the White Paper. Included in the list are the MBFR talks in Vienna. The parties to the talks are NATO and the Warsaw pact. I had the privilege last week, with some of my hon. Friends, of discussing these issues with Lord Carrington and other NATO personnel. It seems that there is a feeling in NATO that we should reconsider our position and accept that there is a discrepancy between our estimate of the Warsaw pact's forces and the strength which the Warsaw pact is prepared to acknowledge in central Europe. We should accept the disparity. Rather than pursue a reduction in force numbers—a goal in which no progress has been made over the years—we should go for fixing a ceiling on the number of forces in central Europe and try to make some progress in arriving at an agreement on conventional forces.

The British Government's contribution to the crucial bilateral disarmament talks in Geneva between the United States and the Soviet Union cannot be described as helpful. It is certainly not helpful to come out strongly in support of the strategic defence initiative. It is not helpful to insist that in no circumstances will Britain's nuclear weapons be included within the ambit of these important talks.

I raised in the House last Friday the non-proliferation treaty review conference that will take place in September and progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty. A debate was initiated on Thursday evening by the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) and the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the right hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) replied. He sought to argue that progress on the NPT review conference had nothing to do with progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty. That was absolute nonsense, as anyone who knows anything about the subject must acknowledge.

When I initiated an Adjournment debate on the comprehensive test ban treaty, the Government came up with the stale response of verification problems. Everyone knows that that is not the problem. The United States pulled out of the comprehensive test ban treaty talks because it did not want an agreement. It is a subterfuge to argue that we do not have the technological means to police underground nuclear tests and to monitor them down to a few kilotonnes. United States scientists have acknowledged that we have the technical means to do so. We have the means to achieve an effective test ban treaty involving the Soviet Union, the United States and Britain, and with the 120-odd non-nuclear power, signatories, we can improve the non-proliferation treaty. Let the British Government take an initiative for progress in this area at least.

7.48 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I hope that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) will forgive me if I do not take up his final argument in detail. I shall concentrate on Trident, the British nuclear deterrent, European collaboration and the strategic defence initiative and their impact on Europe.

I acknowledge that any defence expenditure imposes strains on all services when they are subjected to the financial constraints that are set out in the White Paper. However, I object to the assumption that one item of defence expenditure must go to pay the penalty of such financial constraint. That one item, as seen by the Opposition, is Trident.

Trident is cheap. It is the most economic and cost-effective piece of defence equipment that Britain could possibly have. The cost will be spread over 15 years. It is argued that if we did not have it we would have to strengthen our conventional weapons. What could be bought with about £10 billion? Over 15 years it would buy us about three armoured divisions, and it is a darned sight more expensive to run armoured divisions than to have nuclear equipment. I do not accept that the cost argument has been made out.

I suspect that for political reasons it does not suit the Labour party in its present mood to have a British nuclear deterrent. For reasons that I do not wish to go into because of the limited time that is available, the Liberal party is choosing to face both ways. The Liberal party and the alliance know that if they were to come down heavily on one side or the other they would find themselves in one hell of a row. Of course, it is easy to fudge the issues. However, I ask them to bear in mind the suggestion that has been made by some of their spokesmen that cruise missiles or an extension of Polaris offer a way out. I have never met a serious military expert who takes the view that they provide an effective deterrent. The economies that would be involved in such a policy would be minimal. If we are to address ourselves to economies, the argument is reduced to shreds. We must grasp the nettle. We either want to remain a serious nuclear power or we do not. I believe that we should. There are strong reasons why there should be a deterrent in European hands. If the Opposition want to surrender that, they have the choice of leaving the

supreme decisions in these matters to the United States —always assuming that the United States will see our quarrel as its quarrel and will always wish to put its cities at risk to defend us—or they must recognise that the only European deterrent would be in French hands. I do not find that acceptable.

One way of overcoming the difficulty as we begin to look to the future is to see how we can extend European collaboration and have a European deterrent, while such a thing is regarded as necessary. In that context, European collaboration takes on a wider dimension. It is ludicrous to have one deterrent which is solely British and one which is solely French. There can be significant savings if we pool our resources. That is for the longer term. In the meantime, the Government are correct to stick to Trident.

The strategic defence initiative is another sphere of collaboration. My reaction to it, with that of other people, was somewhat unfavourable. I thought that star wars was just an extension of nuclear war into space. How wrong I was. It was argued that the concept jeopardised the arms contact talks. That could not be further from the truth. I believe that it was the SDI concept which bought the Soviet Union to the negotiating table.

What I find interesting about the initiative is that in the long term it offers the hope of making nuclear ballistic missiles obsolete. In the short term it will mean a shift of emphasis away from deterrence based upon nuclear retaliation to a greater reliance on non-nuclear defence systems. Surely we can all unite on that.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) said that we could not rely on SDI because some weapons would get through, and that the idea of having a type of balloon over the United States which would make it impervious to nuclear attack is crazy. I agree with him. I cannot see that happening, but who knows? There are plenty of experts in the United States who believe that it is possible to develop a defensive system which would make impossible a pre-emptive first strike which would destroy the United States military capability. Although some weapons would get through, not all would. That would seriously question the Soviet Union's ability effectively to destroy the United States.

An effective strategic defence system which would enhance the survival capability of our present nuclear deterrent forces should be supported because it would ensure that a growing proportion of Soviet missiles would no longer reach their targets. For that reason, I believe that a strategic defence system is important.

There is another reason for supporting the initiative. Why should we let the Soviet Union monopolise the system? Why should Western Europe not have some idea of the technology involved in the strategic defence initiative, because it will have tremendous implications for civilian industry? It will give European technology an insight into the new technologies and will provide advantages for industry.

The alternative is to be left out—that surely is not good for us—and increasingly to become a second-class partner in the NATO Alliance.

We should look to see how far we can evolve new defensive techniques which would benefit our industry through co-operation with our Western European partners. The French EUREKA concept seems somewhat vague. It has yet to be spelt out. It does not concentrate, as the United States initiative does, upon strategic defence, but it is a concept that we should welcome.

I see no conflict in this country embracing the invitation of the President of United States to involve ourselves with SDI and the French offer to all Western European nations to co-operate in providing a wider basis for European technological co-operation.

On the narrow point made by my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), it seems to me that the significance of the EFA project is that if we in Europe cannot get together on something that we know to be vital to conventional defence and for employment in our respective countries, and which has important civil applications for our industry, what hope have we of being able to co-operate in the wider spheres to make it possible for us to have realistic and cost-effective defence budgets? That is the challenge thrown down by the White Paper and the report of the Select Committee on Defence.

7.57 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson-Smith) said that the Liberal party and the SDP were somehow undecided about Trident. He is confusing his party with ours. Both parties have clearly stated their opposition to Trident. It is the Conservative party that is divided on the issue.

I should like to deal with a small procurement issue and some more general points. This will come as no surprise to the Minister. I appeal to him to give us a decision soon on the air staff target 404. He is aware of the value of that contract and the input of Westland plc to the services. He is aware that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has invested in the project and that we could obtain significant orders from abroad. It has been one and a half years since the proposals were put to the Minister. It is time that we heard what was to happen. Any decision would be better than none. We naturally hope that he will go for Westland plc and the AST 404. If he does not, I hope that he will at least give us the imprimatur of saying that the Ministry of Defence believes that Westland plc can provide the appropriate aircraft. Even if he cannot do that, will he tell us when he will make the decision?

On the broader issue, a sensible defence policy comes out of a rational assessment of the facts. In a free democracy it is vital that the public have access to the facts so as to provide a rational defence policy with public support. It is especially important that the House of Commons is presented with a true picture and is not misled.

A key element of our present defence policy is NATO's declared readiness to use nuclear weapons first in the case of a conventional attack by the Soviet Union. Many regard that as militarily dangerous and normally reprehensible. However, the Government case is that the superiority—a point made by the hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers)—of the Warsaw pact is so great that such a policy is necessary. The key question is: are they right?

The central element of the Government's argument is that the gap in the NATO and Warsaw pact conventional forces is so large that we cannot bridge it and that therefore it is necessary to use nuclear weapons to offset the disadvantage. The consequence is that instead of the deterrents at two levels that I should like to see—one to deter at the conventional level and one at the nuclear—we have left ourselves with only one response to any Soviet action—the nuclear one.

With low and inadequate conventional forces, and a sole response—the use of nuclear weapons—to any

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

Soviet aggression we have a policy the consequences of which are nuclear weapons constantly held on the hair trigger and a threshold to nuclear war which is dangerously low.

Whether such a policy is necessary depends on the real balance of conventional forces between the Warsaw pact and NATO. One would imagine that the Government would give us the true facts on that. However, it appears not. They seem to prefer to misrepresent the facts to the House and to a wider public—some people might even say, distort and mislead. That appears to be the case in serious documents such as the Defence Estimates and annex A to the Estimates.

I shall first deal with the issue of money spent on defence. The Estimates tell us that some 14 to 16 per cent. of the Soviet Union's income as a nation goes on arms, and that is about three times the NATO average. That is true, but it is misleading. NATO spends more on arms than the Warsaw pact. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's figures the Warsaw pact spends about £151 billion as against NATO's £307 billion. We may not accept the SIPRI figures, but what about those of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in its document on the military balance 1984-85? It gives the Warsaw pact as spending £278 billion and NATO £308 billion. NATO spent more on defence than the Warsaw pact.

As a percentage of GDP, the Warsaw pact's spending may well be higher than NATO's, but we do not win wars on a high percentage of GDP spent on defence. Strong defence systems are based upon the total amount of money that is spent on defence Even on the IISS figures, NATO spends about 1·6 times the amount spent by the Warsaw pact. NATO is stronger in othe, areas as well; it has 1·6 times the manpower and 2·5 times the gross national product of the Warsaw pact.

The disparities are not confined to national statistics. More glaring examples of misleading statistics appear in annex A of the Defence Estimates. The figure on page 54 shows the nuclear weapons held by each side and the Warsaw pact column is substantially higher. No overall figure is given, but the implication is that the Warsaw pact has massive superiority. However, the chart uses missiles and not warheads. Now that we have multiple independent re-entry vehicles—independently targetable warheads—would it not be better to use those instead of missiles? The document "British Defence Policy" is even more exaggerated in giving superiority to the Warsaw pact.

If we look elsewhere we can obtain more honest representations of the balance. For example, the United States congressional budget office study "Modernising US Strategic Offensive Forces" uses individual warheads in its calculations because, it claims — more honestly than ourselves—that that

"indicates the potential targets which can be struck."

That approach is fairer, but it seems that it does not create the impression of Warsaw pact superiority which the British Government want to create.

The United States figures show that NATO is superior. The Warsaw pact has 9,000 warheads compared with the 11,000 of the United States. In addition, our Estimates exclude the capability of Trident. The congressional study includes "hard target capability" — the capacity to deliver a nuclear weapon with a 50 per cent. chance of a hit at a point close enough to exert 4,000 tonnes per sq in overpressure at a certain point—presumably, the missile silo. The report says that there will be no sea-based capacity for such hard target capability for the Americans until Trident D5 is delivered. Indeed, the report goes further:

"The sea-based forces will have to await the introduction of the Trident II(D5) missile in the 1990s to achieve a hard-target capablity."

That is a vital report, because it shows that Trident will give Britain a first-strike capacity. I accept that the Government have no intention of striking first, but they will have that capacity and we cannot blame the Soviet Union if it takes that into account in its calculations.

The United States Under-Secretary for Defence told a Mitre conference in 1981:

"Equipped with D5 Missiles, the Trident submarines will have a 'counterforce capability' — even a pre-emptive capability."

That is frightening, but it is at least honest. How different it is from what we are told in our Defence Estimates. Paragraph 10 of the Trident essay says:

"The United Kingdom's deterrent force, when equipped with Trident, will remain the minimum size compatible with cost effectiveness and credibility".

In fact, according to the American statements, Trident gives us a pre-emptive, first-strike capability.

The clever manipulations and deceptive understatements extend to the conventional balance. Indeed, some of the most glaring examples appear in the conventional balance tables in the Estimates. Figure 10 of annex A shows that the USSR has more divisions than NATO It fails to say that a United States division has 40 per cent. more manpower than a Soviet division.

Figure 9 shows the numbers of Warsaw pact and NATO forces. The Warsaw pact is shown as having a superiority of about 150,000, but the figure does not make it clear that all the Warsaw pact forces in Eastern Europe are included, but only the forces assigned to NATO on the mainland are included. Some British and French troops are left out.

The United States is more honest. A congressional researcher, Anthony Cordesman, who has done much work in this area, reckons that about 256,000 men in France and 70,000 soldiers in Britain are excluded from the figures. Anthony Cordesman's figures, backed up by Mearsheimer, show that NATO has a majority of forces on the ground — 1,113 million against the 933,000 of the Warsaw pact.

Figure 9 gives a ratio of fighting units of 1·2:1 in the Warsaw pact's favour, but a different picture emerges in the figures for tanks. Annex A suggests that the Warsaw pact has a majority of 2:1. Here is revealed an especial sleight of hand. NATO chooses to have tanks in balanced units with other forces. The Warsaw pact's theory of victory is to have heavy tank concentrations. We choose our balance of forces according to our theory of victory, but when we represent the balance of forces, we choose the Soviet theory of victory to assess the impact. That is dishonest and it causes the West always to look bad. We simply move the goalposts.

I could develop some technical points about tanks, but time will not allow that. The United States Department of Defence is more honest and straightforward. Using a sophisticated armoured division equivalent, in which it took all divisions on the central front and weighed them against three charateristics—mobility, surviveability and

firepower—it decided that the ratio was not 2·1:1, as suggested in our Defence Estimates, but 1·1:1 — an insufficient superiority to mount a successful attack.

Annex A puts the Warsaw pact's superiority in aircraft at 2·1:1. I begin to wonder whether the Ministry's figures are just sloppy or are deliberately intended to mislead.

Calculations suggest that in bombs and weapons delivered at 100-mile and 200-mile ranges, NATO has a superiority. All this adds up to the fact that the gap between the strength of our conventional forces and those of the Warsaw pact is not so great that it could not be bridged in a way that would give NATO effective conventional deterrents as well as nuclear deterrents.

If that is so, we are much closer than the Secretary of State would like us to believe to the point where we could abandon a defence posture that relies on the fact that we would be the first to use nuclear weapons in a time of conflict. Abandoning that posture would make the world a safer place.

Finally——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman has exceeded the time limit.

8.7 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) made an incredible and irresponsible speech about the nuclear deterrent and his wish for unilateral nuclear disarmament, which would leave us in a weak position.

I welcome and support the Government's policies set out in the Estimates, their strong attitude on the nuclear deterrent and the overall strategies, which are designed to maintain peace.

I have recently returned from a defence visit to Belize where I was reminded of how essential it is for us to have effective helicopters in support of our services. I was impressed by the commander of the British forces, his staff, the Army and RAF units and the resident battalion, the Duke of Wellington's Regiment.

We must come to a conclusion on our medium and long-term strategy towards Belize. We are there to help to defend it against Guatemala and we use the country as a first-class training area for our forces. I hope that we shall be there for a considerable period and, if we are, I hope that the Ministry of Defence will investigate the accommodation for soldiers and airmen in the airport camp. It is too cramped for a tropical climate and way below the standard that we require on a regular base.

The Estimates cover much sophisticated weaponry that involves high technology. We must never forget that the morale of the men and women who form our forces is most important, and that we want it to remain as high as possible — that is, extremely high. We must never become impersonal or remote from their aspirations. Issues such as pay, promotion, postings, and overseas allowances, matter greatly to them. Issues such as local overseas allowances must be presented better than they were this year. It was not only tough on the commanding officers who had to explain the matter to their units, but on the men. Whatever the practical reasons, which were brought out in the Select Committee's report, to find that the allowance in Germany had been substantially cut was tough. Allowances have been increased elsewhere, but when one has had an allowance for a long time, it comes as a surprise when it is removed at short notice.

Ministers must do all that they can to cultivate a personal touch with our forces. Too many skilled men and women are leaving the forces, a point which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence touched on. I take his point that as the economy may be picking up and as men in the forces are extremely skilled, it is understandable that they are attracted away. To prevent that we must provide good conditions of service, good pay and a promotion structure which enables them to see a long way ahead. After giving them an expensive training, we do not wish to lose them and, more important, their experience, because industry can offer them better conditions. To look after our men and women is a first priority, which has been highlighted in articles in *The Daily Telegraph*. They reinforced what I have been thinking for many months.

I compliment the Royal Air Force on the remarkably high standard of airmanship that it maintains year by year, supported by a host of ground services and control units. Airmanship of the Hercules, which have been going to the Falklands, and of the Red Arrows, of which I have seen two excellent displays during the past few weeks, is of the highest quality. We have made one decision and must make another, and both are crucially important. The first decision related to training aircraft. I hope that the Ministry of Defence will never again embark on a cheapest tender policy. It may have reduced the eventual price well below what was anticipated, but the Ministry's attitude must be to go for the best buy. It is necessary to take into account the quality, specification, performance and handling of an aircraft and balance that against costs. To go for the cheapest aircraft, even if its performance is acceptable, is not to buy the best aircraft for the Royal Air Force.

I wholly support my hon. Friends the Members for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) and for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) about the European fighter aircraft. It is essential in the medium and long term that we in the United Kingdom get the best aircraft that we can and the one that we want. I know that it is a complicated issue and that my right hon. Friend is doing his level best in discussions with our European partners. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden said, if we cannot reach an agreement in Europe about this type of issue, the future does not look too bright. The House will wholly support my right hon. Friend if the British aircraft industry is substantially involved in the EFA.

My right hon. Friend touched on the reserves. I am involved in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. The seven regiment squadrons, the maritime headquarters unit and the handling squadrons have turned out to be a great success in terms of value for money for the Royal Air Force. The fact that the regiment squadrons are now in the line of battle shows that they are trained to the highest standard. They are part of the first-line defence of RAF aerodromes. To maintain the enthusiasm in the Auxiliary Air Force, Territorial Army and home defence force we must ensure that they have plenty of the best possible equipment. Reserve forces undoubtedly like to have good equipment with which to train at the weekend, and take great pleasure in using the highest quality equipment.

Bearing in mind all our operational and financial difficulties, we must continue as best we can to give the squadrons and Territorial Army the opportunity of going abroad every few years for their summer training. That is a great incentive and most important.

[Sir Hector Monro]

Overall, having listened to the debate and the discussion of the Select Committee's report, I am confident that the Government are firmly committed to the best possible defence forces. I welcome the fact that during the past seven years we have been able to increase expenditure in real terms year by year. That is a fine commitment, and one of which Conservative Members are proud. I hope that we shall be able to continue with that in future. Today the Secretary of State gave us a good report, which I warmly support. I look forward to another year of complete support for our forces.

8.17 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): The underlying theme of the debate, acknowledged if underplayed by most Conservative Members, including the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), has been the Government's growing revenue crisis. The immediate shortfall in Government funds has not spared the Ministry of Defence and now threatens to engulf it. The shortfall in the defence budget is obvious not only from the report of the Defence Select Committee, but from the Defence Estimates. It is caused by Trident, which Mr. David Greenwood of Aberdeen university says will involve a £4 billion gap in the defence budget by 1988.

The implications of the gap are most obvious in the effectiveness and readiness of the Navy. According to a defence document that I have been given, the Navy will have less money in real terms in the years to come. It will be undermanned and overstretched, with perhaps 11,000 fewer men in the 1990s, possibly 17 fewer escort vessels, and with a wholly inadequate merchant fleet available for logistic support.

If that were not difficult enough, we have a shortfall in new naval building, increasing demands on aging frigates and submarines at sea and, therefore, an increasing requirement for dependable and speedy refits on land. We therefore need more investment in, and more commitment to, the royal dockyards. Yet the Government have chosen to risk everything by proposing to end the centuries-old public stake in the royal dockyards and to throw them to the hazards of a franchise market.

According to the Secretary of State, the defence gap, which we know exists in the funding available to the Ministry, is to be bridged not by a realistic reappraisal of our defence commitments, as promised by the Secretary of State last year but, as the Defence Select Committee says, not yet delivered. It is not to be bridged by cutting the expensive commitment to Trident, which will remain a wholly unusable weapon of indeterminant cost, nor by any enhanced contribution from the Treasury, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer is already hovering on the edge of bankruptcy in other areas.

Under this Government, the gap between our requirements and our resources, between our growing burdens and falling budget, is to be bridged by ideology. There is to be more competition, more contracting out, more privatisation and more franchising. Somehow the gap in our defence budget is to be bridged by what has been called the voodoo economics of privatisation. From what they call open competition, the Government, as the Select Committee reports, hope for savings of £566 million, but admit that it may be only just over £100 million, or nothing. From contracting out services, another of the Government's favourite themes, the Government hope—according to the Select Committee—for savings of £400 million but concede that they may be only £100 million. Indeed, they might be nothing. From these experiments, the Government hope for savings of more than £1 billion. The Defence Committee says that the savings may be less than £500 million or, indeed, they may amount to nothing. The Government hope to cut costs by 40 per cent., but have to concede that the figure may be less than 10 per cent., and it may even be nothing.

The Government are gambling on the outside chance that when it comes to all the support services and the management of the dockyards, the private sector is cheaper simply because it is the private sector. That is not defence economics or even the economics of the grocer's shop, to which we have become accustomed under this Government, but more like the economics of the betting shop.

Nowhere is the Secretary of State's gamble more irresponsible than in the case of the royal dockyards. They are to be subjected to the disruptions of privatisation on the basis, as I have said before, of a sketchy and contemptible document written by the highest paid civil servant in the land, but which would not rate even a bare O-level pass in business studies.

The proposals, which threaten a private take-over of the dockyards, the dispersal of naval refitting work round the country, and a disruption of the integrity of the naval bases at Plymouth and Rosyth, ignore the experience of every country that possesses a nuclear deterrent and discard every respectable report that has been done on the dockyards, including one by the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) under this Government.

What evidence can the Secretary of State or the Minister give us for their gamble that as they privatise, they will economise, when the whole assumption of their case is that defence work should be carried out in the public sector only when there are "significant" financial advantages? In other words, if the dockyards are cheaper in open competition, they may nevertheless lose the work because of the Government's dogmatic commitment to privatisation. With no evidence beyond simple prejudice, the Secretary of State and the Minister are gambling on the supremacy of the private sector in the management of our naval refitting, against the contention of all previous reports that the dockyards have a far better and proven track record as being more efficient, cheaper and better in time and quality than the commercial shipyards.

In January, the Secretary of State for Defence announced a comparison exercise between the private and public sectors in the refitting of submarines and frigates precisely because, as he admitted, he could not yet expect the private yards to submit "realistic tenders". The comparison exercise was to take at least two years. Now that we are only a few months into that exercise, which was to test the Minister's theories, we are told in a document entitled "The Rosyth Challenge" the conclusions. They are:

"That the indications are that the dockyards are more expensive"

than the private shipyards and that consequently there must be a 15 per cent. reduction in dockyard costs and a 5 per cent. reduction in dockyard staff. It is said that if the dockyards do not respond quickly by the end of the year, they could start losing large elements of their programmes, including the Leanders and the type 42s.

Hon. Members may find it deeply suspicious that, a few weeks after the Minister announced a two-year long competition, he should be able to announce its results, and that in doing so he should ignore the uncomfortable but clear fact that the private shipyards doing the refit work in that exercise have become wholly dependent on the expertise, equipment and even the personnel of the much despised dockyards. The refitting work has been proved to be beyond their own skills and sophistication.

If the private sector is over-stretched and manifestly inadequate to the task of refitting one submarine and one frigate, how could they cope—if the dockyards were run down—with 46 escort vessels, 24 submarines and even with four Polaris deterrents? The Government have forced the royal dockyards to enter a competition in which the winner and the loser have already been declared, and in which the Ministry of Defence has chosen to add insult to injury by demanding that the public sector should subsidise its competitor in the private sector. Even then, the Ministry's whole philosophy is to say that even if the public sector is cheaper and proves that it can do the job at a lower cost, it will not necessarily get the work.

Surely Admiral Leach should be taken seriously when he said last month that he was very "proud and deeply grateful" for the

"professional alacrity of the dockyards in a crisis".

He added:

"It is a little premature now to kick them in the teeth".

The Defence Estimates, and particularly the dockyards experiment—where dogma matters more than evidence—represent the triumph of ideology over experience. In defence, in particular, the national interest is not the sum of the private interests in the economy. The House should reject proposals for privatisation that are doctrinaire, dangerous, unproven and unpatriotic and that have been discarded in the freest of free economies in America, and which, like Trident, have nothing to contribute to the real defence of this country.

8.26 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I support the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) in one respect, and that is in accepting the importance of the role of the Merchant Navy in war. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) also made that point. I was interested in the remarks of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). However, we cannot possibly estimate whether Russian policy, under the titular headship of Mr. Gorbachev, will change. Consequently, our efforts for peace must continue along the same lines until we see some sign of change on his part.

I shall concentrate on the defence of our homeland and installations, as the Government have described in paragraph 448. As I hope to show, there will simply not be enough men, after mobilisation, to man those vital installations.

I think that it is agreed on all sides that the conventional forces of the Warsaw pact are in all cases superior to our own. During exercise Lionheart, it was shown that the time taken for reinforcements was good, but that it would take the United States a considerable time to provide reinforcements. Consequently, we would be entirely reliant on nuclear weapons for our defence.

The third paragraph on page 6 of the Estimates makes it clear that the possession of Trident and of our nuclear capability is likely to inflict unacceptable damage on the Soviet Union. Surely that in itself makes the case for possession of such weapons, helping the peace initiative and strengthening our hand in any negotiations. The Defence Estimates also point out that Trident may result in sacrifices. However, I believe that Trident is so essential that we must keep it. Indeed, it is even more essential given the enormous stocks of chemical weapons held by the Soviet Union. I hope that we shall hear more about what we are doing to protect our soldiers and civilians from any such attack.

Star wars may have helped peace negotiations with the Soviets, but I believe that there are many technological defects which could put that project, as a practical proposition, far into the future. Nevertheless, it may help in our negotiations, as the Soviets are obviously worried about it. We cannot possibly be sure that some of the technicalities such as thermal measurements are perfected, and therefore it may be some time before it is put to practical use.

We have to concentrate on what we have at the moment. We know, and I have tried to show, that the superiority of the Warsaw pact powers means that we are dependent upon our nuclear capabilities. However, we have to remember that when mobilisation occurs, the Defence Estimates show that 100,000 service men will go out of the country. That leaves us bare, in spite of what the Government are doing to create the new home service force. I do not believe that this will be sufficient to guard our installations. It would require only a small number of dedicated people to cripple our strategic installations and we have to face the fact that these people will be disguised. The people who have to detect them should be from the locality.

The Government's policy is to attach members of the new force to TA or regular units. They are all over the country but we should have a force, as has been suggested by Lord Hill-Norton, consisting of local people, perhaps armed with weapons that are inexpensive and not up to date, that can act as an organised and disciplined force to help to catch and, if necessary, to tackle these intruders. They would act as a sort of auxiliary army. With 100,000 troops leaving the country we would be left very thin on the ground.

We do not want a private army, but home defence, as outlined by Lord Hill-Norton, could be an invaluable asset to our army defences and to the Territorial Army and the reserves. The Government should give careful consideration to this and, during exercise Brave Defender perhaps, some experiments could take place. Any force must be responsible and under military authority. The cost would be small, but what it would give to defence would be great. I commend Lord Hill-Norton's proposition and I hope that he will be able to enlarge on it in the other place. I do not ask for an answer today, but we should have this point in mind, and give it serious thought. Perhaps during exercise Brave Defender, we could see how it would work with what we already have.

On a purely domestic level, I thank the Government for helping to expedite the rebuilding of Victoria barracks in Windsor.

8.33 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish) I shall not follow up the arguments put by the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) about reviving Dad's Army, but I shall follow up the point that he made about

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

Trident being so vital. In doing so, I pursue the question that I put to the Secretary of State about whether Trident is credible if the Secretary of State cannot tell us how political control of the possibility of launching the Trident base missile will be achieved.

The Secretary of State appeared to want to brush that point aside, but it is extremely important. He suggested that there is no difference between Trident and Polaris, and that whatever system is used for communication with Polaris would be suitable for communication with Trident. But that is not true. Part of the point about Trident submarines is that they will have a far greater range and will also operate at a far greater depth. Therefore, it is extremely important to know how we shall maintain political control from this country to wherever the submarines are.

The lessons of the Falklands war show that one of the major problems in war is communication. Commander Lewin in many of his remarks has suggested that. Ministers, in justifying their instructions to the Conqueror and the timing of the sinking of the Belgrano, have always used the argument that they had to worry about communications and had to use a fairly broad-brush approach. I think that everyone will accept that such a broad-brush approach would be unthinkable for Trident missiles. Therefore, it is important that the Government should convince us that they have an effective system of control.

As I understand it, the Government did not have a system of communication with the Polaris submarine down in the South Atlantic during the Falklands war, or with much of the task force, that was not dependent on the United States satellites. We did not have our own independent communications system but were dependent on the United States. Therefore, it is not a question of having an effective system for Polaris that can be upgraded for Trident—we probably do not have a system that will operate over such a range. If Trident is to be credible, we have to have instant political control over it, and it has to be independent of the United States.

I understand that the system for control being considered is based on an extremely low-wave radio system that would involved having aerials strung out over large parts of the countryside. The site would be obvious to everyone because of its size and scale, and to a certain extent it would be vulnerable to enemy attack. Therefore, we must ask some strategic questions.

I also understand that an installation of that size and complexity of technology, with the problems of ensuring that it could not be interfered with by radio waves, would be extremely expensive. What costs have been allowed for that? The alternative is that it would be possible to do this via planes, but we should have to have special planes for the purpose. The difficulty there is that such planes would have to follow a regular pattern, and from that it would be possible to work out the patterns of the submarines and in the end they would be vulnerable to attack. That would be equally, if not more, expensive.

It is possible that we could use the same system being considered by the United States for the control of its Trident, which is to use the Nav Star satellites. However, although the United States is planning to put up 18 of these, it is questioning whether they might not be vulnerable to attack and whether they form the system that it wants. Could we claim that we have a credible independent system if we have to rely on the United States satellites? I should have thought that that was not the case. We could consider putting up our own satellite, but that would have such a disastrous economic impact on the programme that it would not be credible.

Where in the White Paper are the specific sums of money to ensure political control over the possibility of launching missiles? Has the Minister looked at the technical problems involved? Would they not involve reducing the distances that the Trident submarines could travel from Britain, and their effectiveness? How much money will be involved? Unless the Minister can answer these and other questions that have been asked about Trident, we must come to the conclusion that Trident is not credible. The British people do not want it and we cannot afford such a system, which will be disastrous for the country, for our economy and for our moral standing in the world.

8.39 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me after the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). I was interested to hear what he said about Trident and communications. Obviously, he has done a good deal of work on the subject. I understand that much of what he said is erroneous but I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say about it.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) talked about Trident being unusable. If deterrence works, of course it is unusable—that is the whole concept of credible deterrence. Before dealing in more detail with Trident, I should like first to mention the local overseas allowance.

As the Member for Norfolk, North-West, I naturally have an interest in LOA because there are many service men in my constituency. There are many RAF bases nearby. There is a strong service tradition in west Norfolk. The Minister will be aware of the grave concern in Germany. I read his speech in the Adjournment debate about four weeks ago. We all know the figures of loss of pay of certain types of officers and soldiers. I believe that the matter was handled very badly and insensitively. The Government's high standing with the services in Germany took a serious knock.

In the Adjournment debate, the Minister said that many of the troops were away from their units when the decision was announced, and heard about it through the media. That is not good enough. It would have been far better if unit commanders had been given a week's embargo on the announcement and had had a chance to tell the people in their units what was to happen.

The Minister knows my interest in the small firms sector. I welcome the document, "Selling to the MOD". I also like paragraph 513 of the defence statement, which mentions that much more attention is being paid to smaller firms, and that the Ministry is looking for greater opportunities for the small firms sector. It mentions that 40,000 copies of the document have been distributed to small firms. Are there any data on how successful the document has been? Are there any figures available? What does the MOD categorise as a small firm? Is it a firm employing under 200 people, under 100, under 50 or under 20? I should like to see figures for the different categories.

I should like to be able to say to the many small firm lobby groups that we have been successful in the policy of trying to help the small firm sector through MOD procurement, but we need more information about it.

The decision on Trident is without doubt the most momentous that any Government have had to make since the last war. The crucial starting point is to ask ourselves whether the United Kingdom needs an independent nuclear deterrent. As the White Paper says, deterrence is a matter of perception, and nuclear weapons in the possession of the United Kingdom greatly complicate the calculations of a foreign aggressor. As the Secretary of State said, we might at some stage in the future—I hope not, and he said that he hoped not — see an Administration in power in Washington that is more isolationist and more Pacific-oriented. If that were to happen, we would be left alone.

I am convinced of the need for an independent nuclear capability, but that capability has to be credible. If it is not credible, it is a complete waste of time and money. I was initially opposed to Trident, which is undoubtedly a Rolls-Royce system. Just as I do not want to see the Secretary of State driving around in a Government Rolls-Royce when a Rover or a Montego will do, likewise, if there could have been a Rover or Montego as a credible alternative to Trident, I should have liked to see that option adopted.

It is incumbent upon anyone who argues against Trident to ask himself about the other options. We have heard tonight what they are. The first is to retain Polaris. I do not believe that that is a sensible option. The submarines will be worn out by the mid-1990s and it will be very expensive to refit them completely.

Although the Chevaline warhead is British, the missile is American, and there would be serious problems in maintaining the production lines in America.

We have heard about cruise from the leader of the SDP, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). It is accurate and is a much-favoured alternative in some quarters, but its range is very short, and that would lead to problems with the detection of submarines. But the main problem with cruise is its overall lack of credibility as a strategic deterrent, because it would not have the necessary assured penetrability.

I have looked very carefully at all the arguments, and initially I favoured the cruise option, but now I am 100 per cent. against it as a strategic nuclear deterrent for the United Kingdom.

There was some talk of building a new British deterrent, but that would be a much more expensive option than the others. There was mention of co-operating with France. I should like to see that at some stage in the future, but in the short term it is completely unrealistic. Therefore, I am led, albeit reluctantly, but remorselessly and irresistibly, to Trident. Of course its power is unimaginable. We all know that the explosive power of one full submarine complement of 16 missiles is 640 times the power of the Hiroshima bomb. Naturally, that leads to disquiet.

We have heard from the Labour party about escalation in the cost of Trident. We do not need many lessons from Labour Members about the escalation of cost. Recently I looked at Barbara Castle's diaries; under the date 11 November 1974 she described a Cabinet meeting when the decision was taken to go ahead with Chevaline. The figure then mentioned by the Prime Minister was £24 million. By March 1976 it had risen to £584 million. We all know that the final cost is getting on for £1 billion. The Government have been very open about Trident, but the Labour Government were utterly secretive about Chevaline, and also about the initial negotiations that might even have led a Labour Government, had they stayed in power, to adopt the Trident option in 1981. Despite the escalation in cost, I still believe that Trident is extremely good value for money.

Our contribution to Trident research and development is very small — about $116 million. The argument about the exchange rate has often been greatly exaggerated. The Henley forecasting centre said that, even with an exchange rate of 63 cents to the pound, the extra cost would be only about $1·5 billion. We know that that will not happen because the pound looks like remaining a good deal stronger than some people might have expected it to be.

Trident will, of course, have a major impact on the defence budget, and I accept the implications of the Select Committee report, but we have to cater for Trident; we have to go ahead with it. The first duty of any British Government is defence. The first social duty of any British Government is defence. The overwhelming majority of people in Britain want an independent nuclear capability. That is why I firmly believe that, if an overwhelming argument is made for an independent nuclear deterrent, it has got to be credible and it has got to be Trident. If it is not Trident, then that appalling, horrific scenario of a nuclear holocaust, far from being less likely, will become more likely.

8.47 pm

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham). I apologise in that I was not here earlier. I have been out of the Chamber for a while, because I was tempted away to a NATO reception, organised by the NATO defence college. When the Minister replies to the debate, he may wish to say something about that very interesting organisation, which was responsible for my being absent for part of the debate. *[Interruption.]* I am sure that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who is on the Opposition Front Bench, was invited to the reception. At any rate, he will be glad to learn that his hon. Friends were represented there.

The NATO defence college should be the think tank of NATO, which it is not at the moment. It has a course to which we send people of moderately high calibre. There is room for a considerable expansion of that NATO facility.

I should like to make some general remarks on the defence White Paper. With good Tory logic, it has a blue cover, which is now a continuation of tradition. For the first time, the defence White Paper contains what might be regarded as a child's guide to defence control. The major arms control and disarmament agreements and talks are set out on page 4. I always think that it is important to discuss simultaneously our defence capacity and capability and the arms control initiatives that Britain and the Alliance are taking.

I do not think that we have a monopoly on concern for defence matters, but I do not see many of the unilateralists here. To a large extent, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) shares with me a mutual and

[Sir Antony Buck]

balanced force reduction approach rather than a unilateralist approach. We have had the common privilege of being Ministers with responsibility for the Navy, and I think that we agree that the unilateralists are the enemies of the multilateralists. If the tough men of the Politburo are to be persuaded to have meaningful negotiations around the table on START, SALT, MBFR and so on, it is important to keep up our defensive position. If they see that we are unilaterally tearing down our armaments system, they will never negotiate.

It is useful to consider what has already been achieved in arms control and disarmament agreements and talks as set out in the White Paper. The 1985 Antarctic treaty prohibited military activities in that region. That is significant in relation to the Falklands. I should like an assurance that the treaty's provisions is not being abrogated and will not be under any circumstances by those who are potentially hostile to us. The 1963 partial test ban treaty banned nuclear explosions in the atmosphere, outer space and underwater. That vitally important agreement has been observed by all sides. I do not believe that there are any signs that it will be abrogated.

The 1967 outer space treaty, the 1967 treaty which established a nuclear weapon-free zone in Latin America and the 1968 non-proliferation treaty which inhibited the spread of nuclear weapons to further countries are also significant. I hope that the Government will state the extent to which those treaties have been obeyed. I should like a frank appraisal of the position, because there has been speculation in the newspapers about the possible nuclear capability of several countries. This knowledge is highly relevant to a consideration of our defence policy. I am concerned about the rumours that certain countries have breached the 1968 non-proliferation treaty. We must ensure that the provisions of the treaties are monitored properly and are enforceable. If they are not enforced fully, public opinion must be brought to bear on the Governments concerned.

The sea-bed treaty prohibits the placing of nuclear weapons on the sea bed. The SALT I agreement limits strategic nuclear missiles. The 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty limits deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems. The 1972 biological weapons convention, the 1977 environmental modification convention, which banned the use of techniques to change the environment for hostile purposes, and SALT II are also mentioned in the White Paper. Some agreements have been of considerable value.

It would be useful at some stage of the debate to have a situation report—in Ministry of Defence terms a "sit-rep"—on the integrity of the agreements and the current position with regard to MBFR talks and the talks in Geneva and Stockholm, which are rightly set out in page 4 of the White Paper. I welcome the White Paper's change in format. I welcome its appraisal, although I should like it to be fuller, of our progress towards what we all want —a reduction in arms on both sides of the iron curtain.

Recently, I returned from a visit to the mid-west of America, which is one of the areas most remote from Europe. It was a personal visit, not one focusing on defence. I know that the hon. Member for Attercliffe shares with me an admiration for many of the facets of the defence efforts of our American allies. I was asked to go to the mid-west under the auspices of the English-Speaking Union, because that area is visited less than certain others. If we ordinary Brits, as we are known, go to New York or other places that are frequently visited, that means virtually nothing. However, in the mid-west —an area that can claim to be the heartland of America — Englishmen and Members of Parliament have a certain rarity value. We should pay high tribute to the people of the mid-west because they are interested in hearing people talk about defence matters. It is remarkable that the people of the heartland of America are not more isolationist than they are because even New York is a long way away.

I pay tribute to our American allies for being prepared to retain more than 100,000 troops in Europe. This is tied up within the points adumbrated in the White Paper.

I have probably one more minute in which to speak.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Member has had 10 minutes. He must bring his remarks to a close.

Sir Antony Buck: I welcome the White Paper. It is sensible in its consideration of disarmament as well as armaments. I pay tribute to our armed forces. They are the finest in the world. I have seen them in many theatres, and in Northern Ireland they perform their task with greater restraint than could any other forces. I am glad to have had this opportunity to make those comments.

8.59 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I welcome this opportunity to speak in what is clearly a defence debate. I say that because any expenditure that we make is designed not for offensive purposes. We are therefore discussing defence in all its aspects, and the White Paper is concerned with defence.

Throughout the debate, differing views have been expressed about how best we can defend our interests, and I do not doubt the integrity of those whose views differ from mine. Indeed, some of my hon. Friends hold differing opinions about how best we are to achieve value for the money that we spend. Hon. Members are bound also to hold conflicting views according to constituency interests. I have a constituency interest, but I will not home in on that tonight.

I wish, first, to deal with deterrence. It is reasonable in a debate such as this to ask whether the nuclear deterrent has worked. We propose to spend money over a long period pursuing what has been the policy of successive Governments since the nuclear deterrent was first introduced by a Labour Government. Thankfully, successive Labour Governments have pursued that policy. Those who believe in the nuclear deterrent take that view.

To judge whether the deterrent has worked, we must examine the situation in the world. We live in a troubled and dangerous world in which war tends to be the norm. There have been close on 150 wars since 1945. That being the pattern throughout the world, why has there been peace in western Europe? After all, we have forces facing each other and there is a huge political and ideological divide.

Western Europe has been following free world policies and the countries of eastern Europe have been following the policies in which they believe. Those who have visited the Berlin wall, let alone the other side of the iron curtain, will not deny that the divisions are real, not imagined.

Why, then, in a world that has suffered so many wars, have we in western Europe enjoyed peace? It is up to those who wish to abandon the nuclear deterrent policy that successive Governments have pursued to persuade us who believe that the deterrent works that their policies, whatever they are, will not jeopardise peace.

I have homed in on western Europe because it would be unrealistic to suggest that eastern Europe has been at peace since 1945. We cannot ignore the events in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The tanks rolled and changes were brought about by force of arms. There were opposing forces. Change was being brought through the use of armed might.

What divides people? It is interesting to note that a substantial number of the wars that have occurred since 1945 have their origins in differences in religious beliefs. Listening to some of the bishops, we might believe that if we practise our Christian principles and tell others that we are practising them, those unbelievers or non-Christians will emulate us.

The evidence throughout the world proves the opposite to be the case. People of different religions who cannot agree on how to live in peace normally end up at war. In other words, many wars occur because people hold different religious beliefs. Some occur because people hold different ideological beliefs; the different ideologies come face to face, the people cannot live in peace, and a war results.

What, therefore, convinces those who do not believe in the deterrent that we should abandon policies which successive Governments have pursued and on which they have been prepared to spend sums of money?

Nuclear weapons are the least expensive of all weapons. When one examines the effect of modern warfare and the cost of inflicting damage to the extent that it would deter a would-be aggressor and inflict an unacceptable degree of damage, one has to consider how it could be achieved at a price that we are prepared to pay.

If we decided tomorrow, as some people suggest, to abandon our nuclear capability, how could such an unacceptable degree of damage be inflicted with conventional weapons for the price of our expenditure upon four Polaris submarines? If we believe that deterrence has worked and if we are prepared to continue to invest the amount of money that is necessary to maintain four submarines for the next 30 or 40 years, the obvious choice is Trident.

Some would argue that Trident is too expensive. I have always taken the view that if my children, and my children's children, never see a war in western Europe, Trident will be seen to have been a bargain, because deterrence has worked. It is up to those Opposition Members who wish to abandon the policy that many of them supported when they were in government to convince me, and others, that the risk ratio will not be altered by its abandonment and, more importantly, to convince me that they can put in its place conventional weapons that will deter a would-be aggressor. It will be no use to appeal to my Christian beliefs. I learned as a very young man in Government service that the fact that I was a Christian had no influence upon the Jews in Palestine or upon the Arabs. My Christian beliefs were put to the test at a very early age. I realised that my Christian beliefs were hardly the kind of shield that would prevent me from becoming the victim of an aggressor.

We in Scotland have a particular interest in the Trident programme. First, it will provide much-needed jobs in Scotland. Anybody who recommends the abolition of the Trident programme has to convince me, and other Scots, that after its abolition the base at Rosyth would continue to employ the same number of people and to do the same kind of job as it has done so successfully for so long. The arguments I have heard largely from the Opposition, have not convinced me, nor have they convinced many of my fellow Scots. We believe that the continuation of the Trident programme will mean that jobs are guaranteed. It may come as something of a surprise to Opposition Members that Governments and Opposition parties make promises about which the public are a little sceptical. It is only when the orders are placed that people believe that jobs will be guaranteed. That is why we in Scotland have an interest in Trident.

As an ex-airman, I am interested in what the White Paper says about the Royal Air Force. I, like many other hon. Members, recognise that Europe needs an air superiority aircraft, or call it what you will; all sorts of grand names will be given to it. We are referring to an aircraft that will be capable of surviving the air battles that could develop in western Europe.

Anyone who has studied battle aircraft will know that an aeroplane that cannot survive at below 15,000 or 20,000 ft in difficult conditions and terrain will not do its job effectively. The most recent glaring evidence of that was the destruction of the Syrian air force by the Israeli air force. It was one of the most outstanding air battles of all time. I cannot think of another battle where one air force destroyed so many opposition aircraft without suffering any losses. It was achieved because the Israelis had the right equipment for the job that they wished to do. No matter how good and how well-trained pilots are—RAF pilots are without doubt the finest in the world and the training system produces pilots of outstanding calibre—if, as we learnt to our bitter cost in the 1939 to 1945 war, we ask pilots to fly aircraft that are not equipped to do the job, losses will be substantial and the task will not be carried out.

I approve of our attempts to collaborate on a European fighter aircraft. If Europe is to mean anything, we must learn to live and work together and to make products that do the job. We must bury our nationalist attitudes—we all possess them, not least the Scots. However, we must listen to what the RAF says about its needs for an aeroplane that will fight air battles in western Europe. We ignore its advice at the peril of future pilots, and that is a price that I will not pay. I am sure that we shall find a solution, but I warn Ministers that the French are good at organising things to suit themselves. I wonder whether they are concerned with air battles in western Europe or whether they have other targets.

One aspect of the RAF that has interested me all my adult life is its reserve forces, which for many years have been run down. Recently, we started to reactivate the auxiliary units. I welcome that good move. The evidence from the operation of those auxiliary units and the calibre of the volunteers who have been attracted must convince even the most sceptical that the programme is worth while and is extremely good value for money. More importantly, we have attracted the volunteer services of some of the best people in the country. There must be considerable scope

[Mr. Bill Walker]

for enlarging the air force reserves at a price that we can afford, so that they can do the job that is necessary if they are ever asked to do it.

However, I make the strong plea to the Government to think about reactivating a flying branch. After all, the RAF is about flying; everything else is secondary. Its purpose is to fly to defend the country. If we want people to drive lorries and carry out other tasks, other services and units could do it much better. But no one flies better than the RAF. If, as I hope, we enlarge the RAF reserves and auxiliaries, I would further recommend that they should be under one command. It is a mistake to have different commands, or to have no clear structure of one air officer commanding those responsible for auxiliaries and reserves. I include in that the volunteers who serve the air cadet branch of the RAF, from which a substantial number of RAF recruits come.

The officers who serve those cadet forces, particularly the Air Training Corps and the combined cadet force, have civilian backgrounds that encompass many different professions, disciplines and experiences. I have always been amazed that we have on tap so many willing people who give of their time for nothing, yet we do not list their full-time jobs——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was wondering whether the hon. Gentleman was aware that at least one other Labour Back Bencher wishes to catch your eye.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me, but I hope that I shall be able to call other hon. Members.

Mr. Walker: I hear you loud and clear, Mr. Speaker.

These debates largely concentrate on the major issues. I believe that I am the only hon. Member who is a serving RAF volunteer reserve officer, and it would therefore be wrong if I did not raise this subject. I hope that the House will bear with me in those circumstances.

I felt that I had to speak about the nuclear submarines in Scotland because of the Scottish dimension, and I am sure that the RAF would expect me to put some of those thoughts on record.

The many disciplines and experiences of the volunteer reserve officers who serve with our air force cadets could be used in emergencies if they were used on the same basis as the Territorial Army. There is much scope for using those people. I speak as their shop steward, and I know they hoped that I would get that message across loud and clear. They are willing and prepared, and we get them for nothing. There cannnot be a better bargain than that. In fact, the only time that these men draw pay is when they are on full-time service. Their volunteer service is given free.

I thank the Government from the bottom of my heart, because in 1962 I wrote a paper on replacing the gliders in which the cadets were trained. I waited a long time before the money was forthcoming, but I thank the Government Front Bench as well as my noble Friend, Lord Trefgarne. All Defence Ministers contributed to the positive action that resulted in the brand new glider fleet for our cadets. I promise that it will be another 20 years before I ask for more replacements.

9.18 pm

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): I wish to raise some questions about the proposed American nuclear-tipped artillery shell and its deployment in Europe. I have corresponded with the Secretary of State about this and have received an interesting reply today.

At defence Question Time on 26 February, Labour Members asked why Dr. Wagner, a senior official in the United States Administration, told congressional hearings that NATO Ministers had agreed to the deployment of the new 155 mm shells in Europe, although Ministers had told the House of Commons that no such agreement had been made.

There were further denials in the House of Commons, but on 1 May Dr. Wagner told Congress that this had been agreed. He said that NATO Ministers endorsed a number of improvements, and listed the new artillery shells as one of them.

Since that denial in the House of Commons, Congressman Fazio has put the record to Dr. Wagner at further congressional hearings. He read the record of what was said in the House of Commons and asked, in effect, who was telling the truth. On that occasion, Dr. Wagner said that the statements of British Ministers must have been made for political reasons and for domestic consumption.

The explanation that I received from the Secretary of State today concludes:

"I am of course not responsible for decisions taken by the United States Government, or evidence given by their officials to the United States Congress. I agree that Dr. Wagner appears to have taken a different view to mine in his testimony. But the facts as understood by the British Government are as I have described them."

It is now clear that a senior American Government official at congressional hearings in the United States is saying something totally contrary to what British Ministers have been telling the House of Commons. There is a direct conflict of evidence. To put it bluntly, the Secretary of State in his letter to me seems to be saying in a polite way that Dr. Wagner is misleading Congress because if that is not so British Ministers must have been misleading the House of Commons. Both sets of statements and evidence cannot be true.

As the Secretary of State now accepts that different evidence has been given in the United States he should explain to the House what steps he has taken to ask the United States Administration to sort the matter out because things are being put on the congressional record which imply that British Ministers have lied to the House of Commons. In those circumstances, one would expect representations to be made to the United States Administration—I should like to see evidence of this—to stop this going on and to clear the matter up once and for all.

This matter is extremely important not just because of the question of veracity and the discrepancy between the records of Congress and of this House but even more fundamentally because this all stems from the claim at the nuclear planning group meeting at Montebello in 1983 that stockpiles in Europe were being reduced, when in fact older weapons were being taken out and replaced by far more dangerous weapons in terms of escalation of the arms race.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Boring.

Mr. Clay: Conservative Members may find it boring, but to me a decision that effectively escalates the nuclear arms race and lowers the nuclear threshold in terms of battlefield weapons in Europe is one which, even more than previous decisions by the British Government, the United States Administration and NATO, endangers the whole future of the world.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Boring.

Mr. Clay: The hon. Gentleman may find it boring but to me it is a serious and terrible matter. It is essential that we should have a clear understanding about whether Ministers have been misleading this House or whether Dr. Wagner has been misleading Congress.

9.22 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): When the Secretary of State presented his annual defence White Paper I was reminded of a conjuror. The right hon. Gentleman flourished facts and figures like Paul Daniels plucking aces out of the air, but from the right hon. Gentleman's hat came no mere rabbit but the most sophisticated weapons systems, and one wondered how long he could go on getting away with it. The Navy is to get the latest type 23 frigates and the type 2400 diesel-electric submarine. The Army has the Challenger battle tank and will get new personal arms for the infantry. The RAF has the Tornado interceptor and the prospect of a successor programme. A division-sized unit — 5 Airborne Brigade backed by 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines — based in the United Kingdom is earmarked for out-of-area capability and deployment.

If all goes as the Government plan, the result will be numerically smaller but better equipped and thus more effective forces. Naturally, Conservative Members seemed excited by what the right hon. Gentleman said and early contributors to the debate described his speech as excellent. Growing scepticism set in later however. According to the Secretary of State, there is to be a host of new and expensive weaponry, enhanced fighting capability, and no change in the plans to go ahead with the Trident strategic deterrent programme. Yet we gathered from the Chairman of the Defence Select Committee, the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins), that there will be a cut in real terms in the resources devoted to defence from 1986-87.

As yet, unlike two years ago, there are no screams of anguish from the Treasury, so we must ask whether the Secretary of State's scenario is realistic. If Conservative Members say yes, we are bound to ask where the money will come from. We can already spot signs of how the trick is being done. Cuts in service manpower levels are being maintained and the services are being made responsible for finding any extra men that they need by economising elsewhere—in the tail, for example.

Mr. Heseltine: Quite right.

Mr. Duffy: I understand that argument, but I wish that the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), who challenged my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) to say where the cuts were coming from, were here to hear the Secretary of State say that.

In the Navy, shore training is being trimmed, flying time for Royal Air Force pilots has been reduced and the Army faces a reduction in the manpower pool that it uses to keep units up to strength when men are sick, away on leave or on courses.

The first concession made by the Secretary of State was his admission to an outflow. In other words, there is a problem of retention. It was revealed that outflow is on the increase — 34,000 last year. Incredibly enough, he blamed competition from industry, yet there is massive unemployment and no sign of employment picking up.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Would Labour give them the pay rise?

Mr. Duffy: Again, it was the right hon. Member for Spelthorne who wrung from the Secretary of State the admission that the pay rise might yet cost the fleet a new frigate. The hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) would not jibe like that if it were to cost him the successor to the Tornado.

There is a growing reliance on Territorials and reservists, not to reinforce the regulars but to bring them up to their war strength. In an attempt to combat rising equipment costs, the Government are making a great effort to increase competition in the defence procurement process. The defence bill will keep increasing while the Treasury demands — and gets — cuts. Nevertheless, the Secretary of State had the effrontery to charge the right hon. Member for Spelthorne and, through him, the Select Committee with a gross distortion of their presentation to the House. They were charged with unnecessary concern for a new policy at the risk of destabilisation.

The right hon. Member for Spelthorne was quite properly concerned about how the defence budget would be managed in the future, especially in the early 1990s. The report says that, although defence spending in 1986-87 and 1987-88 will grow in cash terms by 2·8 per cent. or 1·8 per cent. respectively,

"the outlook in real terms is gloomy",

there being a fall in both years. On the basis of Ministry of Defence data, we find that, within two years, the defence budget, excluding the Falklands, will be £970 million lower in real terms. The outlook in the short term is not too bad, but is this the thin end of the wedge? Alarm bells are not necessarily ringing yet, but are these portents as Trident begins to bite? Shall we see programmes slipping to the right?

Now that the Ministry of Defence no longer needs to spend its annual budget or lose it, there is greater scope than ever for letting expensive new re-equipment programmes drop behind schedule. It is plain from the defence White Paper that the Secretary of State is studiously avoiding firm schedules and timetables. There is a choice example of this in paragraph 206. The issue was taken up in the debate on last year's White Paper. There was anxiety among Conservative Members as well as Labour Members about how we were responding to the pleas of SACEUR — General Rogers — and others to achieve better sustainability, notably in bread and butter items such as ammunition stocks. The Secretary of State sets out specifically in paragraph 306 what the Germans are doing to increase spending. He tells us by how much they plan to increase expenditure and by how much they intend to continue doing so. What about the United Kingdom? It seems that funds have been earmarked over the next few years. No figures are given for the United Kingdom.

[Mr. Duffy]

The management of the defence budget in the 1990s will present major problems. No one who heard the Front Bench opening speeches could possibly doubt that. As the extraordinary report of the Select Committee on Defence states:

"These will lead to cancellations, slowing down of acquisitions and the running on of equipment beyond its economic lifespan."

Given the present equipment programme, there will be enormous scope for the Secretary of State to glaze over the details of procurement.

The Royal Air Force is in the throes of its greatest re-equipment programme for 30 years. The aerospace industry's greatest worry is that it should have a follow-on aircraft. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has observed that the successor programme is not even in the long-term costings. The Army's modernisation programme centres on the new Challenger battle tank. We had a further statement on procurement of it this afternoon from the Secretary of State. The Army also has on order new combat vehicles for the infantry. We heard from the right hon. Gentleman that GKN Sankey, quite properly, is to be given orders beyond the initial one of 250 vehicles, for which tenders have been announced. Members on both sides of the House will have been glad to hear that announcement.

It is clear that the Navy will have to fight to maintain its surface fleet of frigates and destroyers at its present long-term strength of 50. The right hon. Member for Spelthorne argued that five vessels will have to be ordered by the end of next year to preserve the present age structure, which is perhaps more important than numbers. When the hon. Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) challenged the Secretary of State to say when he would follow on the first order of a type 23, he did not respond. Anxiety was expressed over replacements for the two amphibious landing vehicles, HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid. We heard about the Government's commitment to the northern flank but we did not hear about the need for a national capability in the event of ruined ports.

There is the sorry story of the delayed entry into service of the Nimrod airborne early warning aircraft, to which reference is made in paragraph 413 of the White Paper. That has not been mentioned so far during the debate, together with the enormous escalation in cost. That reminds us that programmes can slip without the encouragement of the Secretary of State.

What of the other two problem areas that have not been mentioned so far but which I hope will be taken up by the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement? I hope that he will address himself to the delays in the development of the Tornado F2 radar. Has agreement yet been reached on a common new IFF system?

The details of equipment collaboration on an Alliance basis are set out on page 17 of the White Paper. Programmes are in development or in early study phases, such as the multiple-launch rocket system and terminally guided warheads for that system, TRIGAT, ASRAAM, the long-range stand-off missile, the NATO frigate, the naval ASW helicopter and the Harrier GR5 as well as the European fighter aircraft. I recall again the fears of the Select Committee on Defence on

"cancellations, slowing down of acquisitions and the running on of equipment beyond its economic lifespan."

Is there a Member present who is prepared to wager on the survival of the collaborative programme? If there is, I wonder what odds he would lay against the emergence of it in its entirety in the 1990s. The evidence the Select Committee has received from the MOD has not allayed its or our fears.

The Secretary of State was extremely fortunate this afternoon in his right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne. The House knows that the right hon. Member is a kind, gentle and courteous man. If his damning report, couched in such blistering language, had been in the hands of some other hon. Members whom we all know, the Secretary of State would have had a much more difficult time. This is not a reflection on but a compliment to the right hon. Member for Spelthorne. If the report had been in the hands of some hon. Members it would have been a much more potent and destructive instrument. I shall give a further quote from the document:

"Our purpose was frustrated by vague and evasive answers and elegant but unhelpful hypotheses especially regarding the planning assumptions, the in-service dates and the phasing of expenditure."

I cannot recall a report like that from a Select Committee. Does it, then, make sense to allot to Trident a large slice of a fixed defence budget with all that means in terms of the dilution of the national contribution to NATO's non-nuclear order of battle?

That is the key question before the House tonight, yet the Government say in paragraph 113:

"it is our firm belief that no alternative use of British resources would provide anywhere near such a strengthening of collective Alliance deterrence to aggression."

Let me repeat that, because it is basic to the Government's position on Trident:

"it is our firm belief that no alternative use of British resources would provide anywhere near such a strengthening of collective Alliance deterrence to aggression."

That claim confuses British policy and commitment with the Alliance's capacity and need. Consequently, Trident threatens to become a wasteful duplicative system within the Alliance, not just within the United Kingdom. Ultimately, as the Select Committee warned in paragraph 102 of its report, it puts the conventional equipment budget at risk.

That is where the Opposition come in, because that is how we see the way forward — through a renewed emphasis on conventional arms and increased co-operation, not just within Europe but within the Alliance, and a renewed strengthening of arms control.

The past year has seen a growing public debate, as the defence statement acknowledges, about NATO's strategy of flexible response and forward defence in the light of changes in the military balance and about the roles of conventional and nuclear weapons. It is to the credit of the Secretary of State that that point has been covered. The Select Committee, correctly, claims some credit for that. Those of us who have taken part in defence debates in recent years will recall that some hon. Members present can claim credit for the new format.

The Opposition believe that if the NATO strategy contained on page 12, and especially its underlying argument of flexible response, is to remain credible and acceptable, there must be an enhancement of conventional forces. We recognise that the two factors of overriding importance to defence planning are the time factor and the force levels. The NATO concept of an integrated forward

defence requires, without a doubt, a crisis management decision-making process which could function rapidly, well and cohesively. NATO's response to the threat requires an improvement of conventional force levels.

Two basic needs cry out for attention. First, there is the need to eliminate existing shortcomings and realise agreed goals, especially in sustainability and infrastructure. Secondly, there is the need to modernise and increase active and reserve forces in quantity and quality.

The Opposition are not asking for much. We are not asking for the most sophisticated and advanced systems. We are, like a growing body of opinion within the Alliance on the professional side, asking for improvement at the other end of the spectrum. Lord Carrington made such a plea at the conference to which the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson-Smith) referred earlier. The hon. Member for Beverley, re-elected as president of that assembly, stated as much in his opening address.

Another matter that we believe that the United Kingdom should pursue more vigorously.—there were urgent calls for this from both sides of the House—is co-operation, on both a European and an Alliance basis. Over the years, European co-operation on defence equipment has become increasingly important and there are three main reasons why closer European arms co-operation has become imperative. The first is the sharp rise in the real cost of weapons systems from one generation to another, which results in most countries buying ever fewer aircraft, ship missiles and other major weapons systems.

Research and development activities in the various European nations overlap, leading to duplication of effort and considerable waste. Moreover, the benefits that could be derived from the economies of scale cannot be exploited. We simply must seek military value for the taxpayers' money spent on defence, particularly as it is unrealistic to expect Governments to spend much more on defence equipment at a time of low economic growth and mass unemloyment. The only course is to get better defence from the resources available, as David Greenwood argues.

Secondly, we need to maintain a healthy scientific, technological and industrial base in Europe. We have heard arguments about the importance of strengthening the independent European programme group.

The most important reason for co-operation is the urgent need for greater military efficiency within the Alliance. There are many examples illustrating a lack of standardisation. For years I have heard pleas in the House for improvements in standardisation, rationalisation and operability. I looked up recently some of the facts that the hon. Member for Beverley gave us about duplication in the Alliance. If hon. Gentlemen check those facts, they will be appalled at the overlapping in the Alliance and the consequent wastage.

The view of the Government, as stated in para. 127 of the Estimates, is that the prospects for arms control in the coming year are, as ever, difficult to predict. I wonder whether the Government are being a little too gloomy. Of course, none of us can deny the difficulties to which they refer, but that does not mean that the Opposition will not be looking for progress in the next 12 months, first, because we passionately desire dialogue and a peaceful, soundly based settlement of disputes, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) stressed, and, secondly, because, with the arms build-up and the economic crisis affecting not only the Alliance, but the Third world, as my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) reminded the House, it is vital that if the mad arms race is to be stopped, the balance of forces must be reduced by negotiation. That is not only our wish, but, we firmly believe, the desire of the countries of Eastern Europe.

However, if there are to be genuine discussions, one must stop doubting the other's sincerity, as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) argued. Nothing is more sterile than the almost systematic rejection of any approach.

The leaders of nations have to give each other more trust, because their peoples want that; they want to overcome fears and insecurity in international relationships. History abounds with examples. We heard an encouraging argument on those lines from my right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford. If the confidence to live and let live is built up on both sides it should not prove impossible to reflect a new-found security by means of progressive disarmament proposals.

Here is a job for all of us, but especially for our political parties and our leaders. The present situation is grave. Those with political power must have the will to discover a better way to achieve peace than through amassing nuclear weapons. The future of humanity depends on it.

9.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): Before answering the detailed points made in the debate, I shall spend a little time talking about the jobs that are dependent on our expenditure in both the public and private sectors of our economy.

We calculate that the jobs of about 1·2 million British people—about 5 per cent. of the employed labour force—are dependent in some way on defence expenditure. That 1·2 million breaks down as 325,000 in the armed forces, 174,000 employed by the Ministry of Defence, and 700,000 jobs throughout the United Kingdom industry. Of those 700,000 jobs, almost 400,000 stem directly and indirectly from our equipment programme. A further 130,000 jobs are sustained by defence equipment sales overseas, from forecast receipts of some £2,500 billion in 1985-86.

The real increases in equipment expenditure since 1979-80 have not been matched by increases in employment, mainly because of a significant improvement in United Kingdom productivity, but also because of an increasing emphasis on less labour-intensive project areas, such as software.

However, looking to the future, it is not easy to project the jobs trend. On the one hand, the ending of the 3 per cent. real increases, the drive for greater efficiency, and the increasing emphasis on software point to job reductions, but on the other, the savings that we are now seeing from competition provide the resources for additional or enhanced procurement programmes, and increasing international collaboration should theoretically provide an opportunity for greater export sales.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, when he opens tomorrow's debate, will talk at length about procurement and the increasing success of competition policy and defence sales.

I should like briefly to pay tribute to those civil servants whom we employ, whether they be in the Procurement

[Mr. John Lee]

Executive, in our research establishments — I have visited nearly all our main ones since I have held this office —the dockyards or elsewhere.

Throughout the Ministry of Defence there is a continuing drive to increase productivity and efficiency, and to involve the private sector wherever possible. I make no apology for that. However, that does not mean that we are not deeply appreciative of those who work for us—their loyalty, integrity and skills.

The opening speech of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), of whom we are fond, was rather disjointed. He did not seem to have his heart in the subject in the way that the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) did in his more heavyweight philosophical speech. We had extensive use of the Walworth road cutting service, and selected quotes from the Select Committee report, but two questions from Conservative Members scuppered him.

Early on, my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Viscount Cranborne) asked specifically whether it was Labour policy to increase or decrease defence expenditure. We received no answer to that. Perhaps the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) would care to reply to it. Clearly, he wishes to remain silent. Therefore, we have had no answer to that question.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) asked about nuclear depth charges. The right hon. Gentleman gave an extremely muddled answer, which exposed the ludicrous unilateral posture of the Labour party. That was exposed, emphasised and commented on by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen).

My right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) and the right hon. Members for Llanelli and Devonport talked about the pressure on our budget. By April 1986 we shall have completed seven consecutive years of real growth. The United Kingdom budget is the second highest in NATO in absolute terms and per capita, our gross domestic product percentage is the highest of our major European allies, and the proportion of the budget that we spend on equipment is the highest of any NATO country. On NATO force goals the Select Committee commented:

"high force goals have been set by the United Kingdom and a high proportion of these have been met."

Regarding the future, we never planned to have 3 per cent. real growth after 1985-86. The Select Committee sees "worst case" projection of the defence budget in 1987-88 as £970 million less in real terms than that in 1985-86, but that is based on rather speculative hypotheses. At the same time, the Committee sees potential for £700 million savings by efficiency measures. Even on its own terms, the gap is extremely small in proportion to the £18 billion to £19 billion overall figures for defence. But the benefits of competition could well be greater than envisaged by the Committee. Earlier this afternoon, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State drew attention to the £100 million or so saving on the MCV80 competition, with the contract going to Guest, Keen and Nettlefold. Of course, we also had the competition for the RAF trainer which produced savings of about £60 million.

But the fact remains that defence expenditure is now at a level that is £3 billion higher per year in real terms than when we came to office. That is an extremely good record, of which Conservative Members can justifiably be proud.

Several hon. Members raised the subject of Trident. Arguments against Trident, which we have all heard before, have been repeated. However, I shall comment briefly on the Government's position. Incidentally, I was particularly grateful for the support of several of my right hon. and hon. Friends, including my hon. Friends the Members for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) and for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). We are committed to the maintenance of an effective British strategic nuclear deterrent. It is a policy that has been followed by successive Governments since the 1950s. It convinced them and it convinces us.

The reasons for the selection of Trident to meet that commitment have been fully spelt out in our open government documents and our defence White Papers. I commend to the House the discussion of the case for Trident that is set out on pages 6 and 7 of the 1985 statement on the Defence Estimates that we have been debating.

I turn now to the points raised today and to the question of cost and affordability. The latest estimate is just under £9·3 billion at 1984-85 prices. Trident costs are often referred to in the press and by the Labour party as "spiralling" or "out of control" or, if they are feeling charitable, as just "escalating". Such phrases are repeated ad nauseam, but they are simply not true. Let me say in the clearest possible terms that there has been no real increase in the estimate for Trident D5 since it was first announced — no real increase at all. The difference between the current and original estimates is due entirely to inflation and exchange rate movements. Over the same period, however, the defence budget overall has increased in real terms. Thus, there is room both for Trident and for improvements in our conventional capability.

We listen carefully to the right hon. Member for Devonport when he talks about conventional expenditure. However, his arguments about their being a realistic nuclear alternative to Trident in the 1990s are not very convincing. With respect, it is not satisfactory at this stage to talk about possibly running on Polaris with increasingly expensive refits, or perhaps encouraging British Aerospace to produce a new weapon. *[Interruption.]* I believe that on previous occasions the right hon. Gentleman has mentioned the running on of the Polaris fleet. He also mentioned the possibility of cruise missiles on submarines. In our view, those are not serious or realistic options.

Dr. Owen: The Pentagon has spent money on putting cruise missiles on submarines. That has not been done for no purpose. As far as the Pentagon is concerned, they are not the ultimate deterrent, but they are an adequate deterrent.

Mr. Lee: That would be right as part of a mixed force, but there is no realistic alternative to Trident when it comes to our major strategic deterrent and our weapon of last resort.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lee: I am sorry, but I shall not give way.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne, my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) and the hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) and for Attercliffe mentioned escort numbers. We are committed to maintaining 50 escort vessels. We are talking broadly of ordering three type 23 frigates a year. The order for the first of class, HMS Norfolk, was placed last year with Yarrows, and tenders for the following three —O2, O3 and O4—will be invited in the late summer.

Several hon. Members mentioned amphibious capability. I can say that Fearless and Intrepid will certainly continue in service well into the mid-1990s. Studies are in hand for a capability beyond the 1990s, and decisions will be taken by Ministers in that whole area later in the year.

A number of hon. Members have spoken about merchant shipping, particularly my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), who always speaks about merchant shipping. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) also spoke on the subject. As the House knows, our merchant fleet plays a significant role in our defence planning. Consequently, as the defence White Paper makes clear, the recent decline in the merchant fleet has caused us concern. I repeat that, at present, the overall size of the merchant fleet is adequate to meet our foreseeable defence needs, with the exception of deep-sea trawlers for the minesweeping role. I believe that I am right in saying that the Select Committee acknowledged that. In the case of deep-sea trawlers, we have studies urgently in hand to find alternative ways to meet the requirement.

Because of our concern at the possible prospects for the future, the Department of Transport commissioned its study of future availability of merchant vessels to meet our requirements. That study will very shortly be completed, and as soon as its results are available, they will be carefully examined. I cannot predict in advance what the results of the study will be, but I note the comments on publication made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton, and we shall consider that.

The strategic defence initiative is a research programme intended to investigate the technical feasibility of defences against ballistic missiles. Such research is permitted under existing treaties, and it is entirely prudent that the United States should conduct this work. I am grateful for the contribution made by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) in supporting our Alliance and our American allies.

As for the broader implications of SDI, the Government's position rests firmly on the points of agreement reached by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister with President Reagan in December of last year. First, the United States, and Western, aim was not to achieve superiority but to maintain balance, taking into account Soviet developments. Secondly, SDI-related deployment would, in view of treaty obligations, have to be a matter for negotiation. Thirdly, the overall aim is to enhance, not undercut, deterrence. Finally, East-West negotiation should aim to achieve security with reduced levels of offensive systems on both sides. This is the purpose of the resumed United States-Soviet negotiations on arms control, which we of course warmly welcome.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear, we hope that our scientists will be able to share in this research. We are actively discussing with the United States and with our European allies the details of this complex matter.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton and my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) referred to the problems of Westlands. Obviously, it is of considerable strategic concern to the United Kingdom, and we want the company to continue. The Ministry of Defence has about £150 million-worth of orders with it, for a mix of 29 Sea Kings and 13 Lynx helicopters, which should be completed by around spring 1987. We are discussing further possible orders of Sea King and Lynx.

The W30 has been mentioned, but it would be wrong to buy costly items of equipment from Westlands until the services have established a firm requirement for it. The delay is due to a genuine review of the Army's needs. Its decision on the requirement will not be made until late autumn. Nevertheless, because of the strategic importance of Westlands, we are watching over the situation and the takeover extremely closely.

A number of hon. Members have spoken about EFA —my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), as usual, and my hon. Friends the Members for Woking (Mr. Onslow), for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and for Tayside, North.

As we are approaching a crucial period of negotiations the House will understand that I cannot say a great deal about the EFA project tonight. There have been differences between the partners over a number of issues. None the less, progress was made by Ministers in Rome towards an agreed position on the size of the aircraft.

The next round of discussions will help to show whether our further requirements — on, for instance, design leadership and work share—can be met. I can assure the house that we would not be prepared to enter into the programme if it undermined the future well-being of British industry.

I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble about an early decision. As a Lancashire MP myself, I understand the present concern in British Aerospace at Warton and Salmesbury.

Several hon. Members have mentioned problems relating to recruitment and retention. In 1978-79, the total premature voluntary retirement by male members of the Armed forces was just over 12,000—a rate of 4·4 per cent. It fell to 1·7 per cent. in 1981-82, and the latest figures for 1984-85 show a level of 2·5 per cent. I acknowledge that there is a rising trend of applications to leave the forces prematurely, and the House can be assured that we are keeping the question under very close scrutiny.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

South-East Dorset

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Major.]*

10 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity of raising a matter that is of continuing concern to and in my constituency and throughout the county of Dorset. There are four county constituencies in Dorset, and I do not think that my hon. Friends will argue too much with me if I say that overall mine is the most vulnerable to the matter that concerns me tonight — the persistent and ruthless pressure for development in south-east Dorset.

Therefore, my purpose is to ask the Minister—whom I am delighted to see in his place—a simple question. Will he convey to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment the view of the Dorset Members of Parliament—certainly the four of us who represent the county constituencies — that we look to see a reversal of the Government's policy, which at the moment appears to be one of development at all cost?

My hon. Friend the Minister has today been much concerned with sporting matters. I shall make one sporting allusion, if I may. If he regards this Chamber as a stadium, and his right hon. Friends and himself in the Government as the players on the pitch, those of us behind him, the supporters, in many of the shire counties, are feeling restless over the erosion of the green belt and the constant pressures for development. I hope that he will see his way towards ameliorating the present policy. If he does not, I fear that some members of the supporters club may desert him or, even worse, may eventually come down on to the pitch and demand a change of policy.

The main problem is that the local authorities in my constituency—the Christchurch borough council and a portion of the Wimborne council—feel more and more that they have lost control over their environment. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), who is here tonight, had an Adjournment debate as long ago as 1 July 1981, when he raised, thoroughly and competently, the question of the erosion of the environment and, in his particular case, the gobbling up of agricultural land by development.

We believe—I have the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset South (Viscount Cranborne), who regrets that he cannot be here this evening—that local planning decisions should be respected and overturned only in the most exceptional circumstances. We believe that the exploitation of the planning laws, plus the Department's policy, is rendering our structure plan absolutely meaningless.

Christchurch and Wimborne are small local authorities and are vulnerable to the constant pressure on them. As the chief executive of the Christchurch council said in a letter to me:

"Therefore, every time the local authority is called upon to make a judgment is is not free to do so in the light of just the local situation but always has to have regard to what the Department of the Environment might decide should the matter go to an appeal."

He goes on to say:

"In summary it is my opinion that the appeal situation in planning is objectionable in terms of democratic accountability and is insidious on its effect on elected Members when considering applications."

I do not wish to weary the House with endless quotations, but should like to note a few more. This afternoon, Mr. Malcolm Edwards—in addition to being chairman of the Christchurch housing committee, he is chairman of the Christchurch and East Dorset Conservative Association—said:

"We have the ridiculous situation where councils decide planning applications not on the basis of what is right or wrong, but what is likely to win on appeal. The great problem of the planning situation is that it just is not recognised that there is a level beyond which an area becomes saturated and its infrastructure cannot cope with anything more."

He went on to ask:

"What is the planning process all about if it is not to preserve the amenities of the environment?"

Recently, my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North and I had a meeting with members and officers of the Wimborne council. Their pleas are plaintive. They feel that they have virtually lost control of their ability to make strategic planning decisions.

The chief executive of the Wimborne district council said:

"The Authority has felt inhibited from imposing any serious policies of restraint, especially in its local plans, despite public opposition to continued growth, to a large extent because of the tone of the guidance being given by the Secretary of State in circulars, and in public speeches, with their emphasis on meeting demand for housing land, especially as Wimbourne is an area of continuing high demand. This has meant that in all the local plans it has prepared so far, the Council has deliberately proposed growth at the upper end of the range allowed under the South East Dorset Structure Plan.

The Structure Plan is now being reviewed, partly because the intention steadily to reduce the rate of building and the amount of land available for development has not been achieved. However, the tone of government advice again makes it difficult to envisage this review successfully leading to the adoption of any strategy for the restraint of growth, even this should prove well justified."

The 1984-85 Dorset council monitoring report shows that more people are moving to Dorset than to any other county. The county council's reaction is "We need to review the south-east Dorset structure plan." People in my constituency do not agree. We need much stricter adherence to the present plan or the structure plan will be regarded not just as dead but as having been a cynical exercise in public misrepresentation. My hon. Friend the Minister knows full well what was done to seek public opinion on these county structure plans.

Much of south-east Dorset lives under the shadow of the ambitions of Bournemouth, and Bournemouth's interests differ greatly from those of my constituents and my colleagues. If I illustrate the position in two respects, I think I shall clearly point out to my hon. Friend the Minister just how Bournemouth's insidious influence is affecting my constituency. One is at and the other is adjacent to, Hurn airport. Christchurch council is the planning authority for Hurn airport. Hurn lies wholly within the Christchurch council area, yet the airport management committee that runs the airport is dominated by people not from Christchurch but from Bournemouth although Christchurch is represented. The airport management committee has shown an arrogant disregard for not only the Christchurch council's policies but the council's legal role as the planning authority. When the British Aerospace factory closed recently, the Christchurch council policy was simply to keep aerospace-related employment at Hurn airport, on the site and in the

buildings formerly occupied by British Aerospace. The site is zoned already for industrial use and it is the ideal place in which to carry out these activities.

The airport management committee, without any reference to Christchurch council as the planning authority, has leased two of the large hangers for grain storage. Warehousing means a change of use in planning terms, but no reference was made to the legal planning authority. This has had a serious effect, because companies that we are trying to attract to the buildings at Hurn airport—such as Lovaux, which recently took out a lease on some space for aerospace-related purposes—find now that grain is stored there. This is a fire risk and a serious dust threat to high-technology aerospace developments. Lovaux finds this aspect extremely unattractive. It was told nothing about it at the time it signed its lease.

The planning aspect alone is serious enough, but there is a worse implication. Some Bournemouth councillors are desperately trying to aid and abet the creation of an enormous development in my constituency at Hurn by the Carroll group of companies. If Christchurch is successful in attracting aerospace-related employment into Hurn airport, into the buildings that already exist, that will make the Carroll proposition a great deal less attractive.

We have the serious situation, therefore, of councillors not representing Christchurch deliberately trying to thwart the wishes of the elected local authority in its effort to develop jobs and industry in the buildings that already exist.

As for the Carroll development, Mr. Gerald J. Carroll —of the Carroll Group of Companies, Carroll House, 2-6 Catherine Place, London, SW1E 6HF—is a great Dorset philanthropist. Mr. Carroll is a lover of the Dorset countryside, with a humanitarian concern for the employment prospects of my constituents. I say that slightly with tongue in cheek, to put it mildly. In total, 576 acres of my constituency have been subject to persistent and ruthless attempts by the Carroll Group of Companies to obtain planning permission to transform this area of my constituency.

Earlier this evening, I spoke to my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson), who used to represent the area, and I have his strong support for saying that we look to the Government to do all they can to uphold the planning authority, Christchurch council, in its objections to what is proposed.

As I mentioned, Mr. Carroll is backed by certain interests in Bournemouth, and they have an incentive to ensure the failure of the present policy of Christchurch at Hurn. Mr. Carroll is quoted in the *Evening Echo* as recently as 8 June in relation to his 576-acre scheme as saying:

"It would probably go to appeal."

He went on to say that he believed that in their efforts to assist investment and employment in the region, the Government would approve it.

Mr. Carroll wants housing and shops; the factories in his plan are just makeweight. We have plenty of empty factories in my constituency. In any event, the building of factories does not of itself create jobs. Thus, the great myth is being dangled before my constituents that somehow this development will create an enormous amount of employment. Mr. Carroll's concern for the employment situation in my constituency is purely synthetic and is a quid pro quo for permission to build shops and houses.

Christchurch is implacably opposed to it, as is the Wimborne council and the New Forest district council. It would distort the pattern of life throughout the area.

I said earlier that Mr. Carroll was a lover of the Dorset countryside. I have discovered that the Dorset Naturalist Trust has been offered £10,000 to establish a nature reserve as part of Mr. Carroll's plans. If I were a nice man, I might think what a decent chap Mr. Carroll was. If I were rather suspicious, I might think that that was one way of seeing that a potential objector was bought off. The use of money to influence attitudes on controversial planning decisions is wholly unacceptable. I do not, of course, hold the Dorset Naturalist Trust in any way responsible. I cannot say the same for Mr. Carroll.

In my constituency there is a number of small communities. They are in danger of being swamped. Indeed, some already have been. There is a completely inadequate infrastructure in relation to the police, doctors and so on. The list is endless of facilities which have not been provided in a vain attempt to try to keep up with the endless demands of developers.

The vital point to make in national terms is that this is a north versus south issue. So long as the Government go on allowing, indeed encouraging, developers to develop in the prosperous parts of southern England, so long will those developers not be encouraged to turn their attention towards developments in the northern, and less prosperous, parts of the country.

The Minister should accept, therefore, that this is not just a Dorset problem. Hon. Members who represent constituencies in all parts of southern England are becoming more and more concerned over this problem. My hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward) will, I hope, deal with the question of oil. The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 has played absolute havoc with housing in my constituency. Again to quote Mr. Malcolm Edwards:

"We haven't got room for our own people and we are obliged to accommodate people who come from elsewhere with no previous contact with the borough."

We have road problems. A number of my constituents in Hampreston lane in Longham now face the appalling prospect of a huge road being built literally on their front doorsteps, and because it is not a trunk road they will probably be unable to claim adequate compensation.

In a speech on 14 March to the County Planning Officers Society, the Secretary of State for the Environment spoke of his presumption "in favour of development." That is uacceptable to Dorset unless—and it is a strong "unless" — the district council concerned is completely in favour of it. Once this land is built upon, the development cannot be undone. In my part of Dorset we are threatened with the policies of the Department of the Environment, the ambitions of Bournemouth and, frankly, the greed of certain big developers. I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment to take note of the strength of feeling on this issue.

10.16 pm

Mr. John Ward (Poole): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) for the opportunity to make a brief contribution to this

[Mr. John Ward]

Adjournment debate upon the environment of south-east Dorset. Those who are familiar with the county of Dorset will be aware of what a delightful place it is. I can well understand the concern about the environment that my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch has so ably expressed on behalf of his constituents.

In the time available to me, I wish to refer briefly to the environmental aspects of oil exploration, both onshore and offshore, particularly in the area of Poole harbour. Hon. Members will be aware that it is planned to expand the production of the Wytch farm oilfield, which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Viscount Cranborne), from 4,000 barrels a day to 44,000 barrels a day. Dorset county council has recently granted planning approval for four exploration wells on Furzey island, which is in the middle of Poole harbour. We are pleased to know that separate approvals will be needed before production wells can be sunk in the harbour.

I pay tribute to the way in which British Petroleum has worked with the Dorset county council and all other interested parties to ensure that every precaution is taken to protect the environment. This is essential not only for the boat owners and holidaymakers, whom we welcome throughout the year, but for the many fishermen who depend upon the harbour for their livelihood.

We must not, however, overlook the positive side of oil recovery: the new jobs that will be created in Poole and the surrounding areas and the new orders for local firms. Recently, we have heard that BP, having no use for the large house on Furzey island, is prepared to make it available for the use of the local community. A number of local people will investigate ways in which it can be made available for such use without cost to the local community.

Dorset county council had asked the Department of Energy to allocate the two offshore licence blocks in Poole bay to BP because it felt that it was sensible that those two blocks should be dealt with as an extension of the Wytch farm development. I am pleased to say that the Minister has agreed to the county council's request. A certain sense of relief is felt when one deals with people one knows about such matters, particularly when they have shown that they understand the local environmental problems.

The recovery of oil is in the national interest, but that does not mean that there are no legitimate local interests, too. We in Dorset are not complacent about the discovery of oil. We know that the price for the successful recovery of oil without damage to the environment is the exercise of constant vigilance. We shall certainly exercise that vigilance. We are sure that both the Government and the oil companies will similarly recognise their responsibilities.

10.18 pm

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) on raising this matter, which is critical to Dorset and to the south of England. We fully recognise the need to encourage development of the economy and the creation of new jobs and to allow new small industries to tuck into villages and towns to replace the jobs that agriculture can no longer provide. There are limits to the positive efforts that can be made to encourage development in areas that are economically declining, but Ministers can do some things to assist the economically declining areas and to deal with the environmental crisis which my hon. Friend described.

First, local planning decisions, especially those limiting development, should be overturned only in the most exceptional circumstances. The overturning of such decisions creates a decline in morale among councillors and in planning departments, which leads many of them to believe that planning power has been taken out of their hands. Secondly, we should achieve a greater adherence to structure plans by keeping development within the limits laid down in those plans. The rate of growth already provided for in the south-east Dorset structure plan is far below the present rate of population and development in the area. My hon. Friend referred to the Dorset county monitoring report, which produces some frightening figures.

Thirdly, we must protect the environment. The pressures on agricultural land and its disappearance, which I described in my Adjournment debate on 1 July 1981, have become worse in the intervening years. The pressures on farmers, nature and wildlife have also increased. That does not happen without the decision of man. It is the result of planning decisions taken by Governments and local authorities.

Fourthly, a declared policy of favouring development in the north of the country—in counties which are keen to increase housing and industrial development—would have considerable appeal and would be highly relevant to the divisions in the country today. It could be an attractive policy that would help to generate jobs in areas which need them, perhaps even more than Dorset needs them.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take the matter seriously, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch for having raised it.

10.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Neil Macfarlane): Many people will be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) for introducing this important debate, and to my hon. Friends the Members for Poole (Mr. Ward) and for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker). The subject is clearly of great importance to their constituents, and that is why they have expressed their views forcefully on several occasions in the House, and also to my Department. Obviously, I shall not be able to cover every subject that has been raised, but I shall ensure that my hon. Friends receive replies to the important issues that they raised, including road improvement schemes, inadequate roads and the oil and gas industry. However, I wish to deal with the broader strategy in which we are involved.

The whole of south-east Dorset has considerable appeal as an area in which to live and work and to spend one's leisure. That general attraction is a reflection not only of the area's inherent qualities but of confidence in the future. My hon. Friend's anxiety — it is a concern of the Government, too — is that planning should respond to the challenges that growth poses in the most suitable way.

The local responsibility for planning lies with the county council and the district councils. Those authorities are aware of local conditions and can best take account of local opinion. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State becomes involved whenever the structure plan is altered, when appeals are made following the refusal of planning

permission or the imposition of conditions, or when he decides that, in the case of any development, he rather than the local planning authority should make the decision.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch mentioned the fact that local authorities are worried that their decisions are too frequently overturned on appeal. I am aware of some, but not all of the cases he has in mind. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on an appeal decision once it has been made. But if my hon. Friends would let me know of such cases that have caused concern to local authorities, I shall examine the circumstances, although I must emphasise that there can be no reappraisal of the decision. However, we should examine in detail some of the issues mentioned by my hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the major development that is proposed at Hurn airport. I understand that an application for planning permission is with Christchurch borough council, and my hon. Friend will appreciate that I cannot comment on the case. To do so could prejudice my right hon. Friend should the matter come before him for decision. Nor can I comment on any reports of negotiations that may be taking place between the prospective developer and any interested parties.

The Government's policy on development control is simple and clear. Planning permission should be granted unless there are sound planning reasons for refusal. I urge my hon. Friend to read the full text of my right hon. Friend's speech rather than what was reported in one of the major newspapers. However, the presumption must always be to allow development to take place unless it can be shown to be harmful, not the other way round.

Development represents economic activity—as my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North said—jobs and social benefits such as more and better housing. No unnecessary obstacles should be placed in its way, and the social and economic consequences of a refusal of planning permission must be borne in mind by those in the local planning authority who consider and decide planning applications and plan for their areas.

This policy does not mean haphazard growth, endless urban sprawl or unnecessary losses of countryside and agricultural land. This Government are firmly committed to the policies which conserve and protect green belt land and the countryside and which ensure that the bulk of development takes place within existing settlements, particularly inner city areas and on derelict land. Our planning circulars, which planning authorities must take into account in operating the planning system, have all laid particular stress on this commitment.

In many cases a difficult balance has to be struck between the benefits of development, including to the community at large, and the need to ensure that it takes place in the right places. In some areas there must be a presumption against most development, if the planning system is to serve its prime purpose of securing efficient use of land while ensuring that development may take place. It has to reconcile competing pressures, but it must cater for economic and social progress. No one can afford to prohibit change. That is a recipe for stagnation and decline, and a negative approach will not serve anyone's interests in the long run.

For our part, we have taken concerted steps to encourage new development to look to the inner cities and to the areas of the country where the competing pressures are less, and the social need greater. The urban programme, derelict land grant and land registers, enterprise zones, the urban development corperations in Liverpool and London, and our proposals for simplified planning zones are all positive measures, helping to secure the economic resuscitation and greater prosperity of the areas in great need of new growth and development. We have increased the allocation for derelict land grant in England from £23·5 million in 1979-80 to £76·4 million in 1985-86, and the allocation for the urban programme increased from £93 million to just under £340 million over the same period. Of the 17 enterprise zones that we have established in England, 15 are in the north and midlands.

Mr. Adley: Does my hon. Friend accept the proposition that he would encourage development in the north by discouraging development in the south?

Mr. Macfarlane: That requires a fairly detailed response which the constraints on time would not allow, but I am more than happy to discuss that more fully with my hon. Friend. He, like me, would support the principles of market forces and the market place, and would agree that encouragement and discouragement are essentially for the planning authorities. However, the Government must create the right conditions, and that is why we have spent a great deal of taxpayers' money to try to ensure that there is an effective balance between north and south. It takes time to put that right.

Our planning circulars on land for housing, on industrial development, and on development plans have urged authorities to ensure that sufficient land is available in the right places to enable development to take place without any unnecessary encroachment on the countryside. But the vitality of the economy, both local and national, depends on new development. We must all, therefore, ensure that planning decisions help, not hinder, growth and enable development to take place in a way that brings the best possible balance of advantage to the private and public interests at stake in each case.

My hon. Friend has spoken about the growth of south-east Dorset, and the facts are not in dispute. Between 1971 and 1981 the usually resident population increased by 7·7 per cent., and Wimborne and Poole districts grew at a particularly fast rate. There is no evidence that this growth is slowing down; indeed it is possible that migration into south-east Dorset has increased.

This growth of population clearly creates a demand for houses, but it would not be right to assume that all of the demand stems from newcomers. There is a universal and long-established trend for new households to need separate accommodation. Although the average household size in south-east Dorset is already low, there is nevertheless a continuing demand from this source.

Housing completions in south-east Dorset have been greater than expected within the structure plan. The plan proposed that about 35,000 dwellings would be provided between 1976 and 1996, of which between 20,400 and 26,500 were to be on large sites and 10,500 were expected to be built on small sites, The latest monitoring information shows that at the end of March 1984 some 25,100 dwellings had been completed. This high number of completions has not been because of any disregard of the plan. Development of the large sites identified by the structure plan has proceeded more or less as expected.

[Mr. Macfarlane]

In contrast, many more houses have been built on small sites within the urban areas than the plan assumed. In principle, this kind of development is to be welcomed because it helps to reduce the loss of open countryside.

This growth reflects the needs of industry and banking and insurance services to move into the area. Bournemouth and Poole have successfully attracted new offices. Of recent moves, it is heartening to hear of the relocation to Poole of National Mutual Life of Australasia and the intention of Chase Manhattan bank to bring the major part of its headquarters to a new campus site at Bournemouth. The port of Poole has greatly increased its trade and the completion of the second roll-on/roll-off ferry terminal should be a further boost to its growth. These are encouraging developments and show that the economy of the area has vitality. They are important for job creation, which I am sure my hon. Friends will agree is necessary——

The Question having been proposed at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 13 June 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration read.
To be considered upon Thursday 20 June.

YORKSHIRE WATER AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (TROWSE BRIDGE) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 20 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Security

1. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Since I last answered questions in the House on 9 May, four police officers and two civilians have died in incidents arising from the security situation in the Province. The recent tragedy at the Killeen border crossing point, in which the four police officers died, underlines the grave risks which the security forces continue to face in carrying out their duties. I am sure that the House will join me in paying tribute to their outstanding courage and determination to defeat terrorism. Our sympathies go to the families of the bereaved.

Since the beginning of this year a total of 230 people have been charged with serious offences, including 20 with murder and 18 with attempted murder, and 103 weapons, 5,715 rounds of ammunition and 3,858 lb of explosives have been recovered.

Mr. Proctor: The House will be grateful to my right hon. Friend for that statement. Does he regret the reluctance of the Irish Police Commissioner, Mr. Wren, to meet and to co-operate with Sir John Hermon, the Chief Constable of the RUC, since such co-operation must be in the best interests of both police forces to ensure that terrorism is eliminated as speedily as possible?

Mr. Hurd: It is not for me to analyse the position of Commissioner Wren of the Garda. As my hon. Friend knows, in many ways there is strong and worthwhile co-operation between the RUC and the Garda, as a result of which many lives have been saved. However, that must be buttressed by regular meetings at a senior level between the two police forces, and I would hope that it could be regarded as a matter of course that the two chiefs of the police forces should also meet from time to time.

Mr. Maginnis: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Chief Constable of the RUC has consistently stated that he has no disagreement with Commissioner Wren? Has the commissioner or the Government of the Irish Republic identified to the British Government the substance of any disagreement on their part with the chief constable?

Mr. Hurd: No, Sir. As the hon. Gentleman said, Sir John Hermon has always been keen to improve co-operation, which in many respects is good, but which could be improved.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the Secretary of State comment on the remarks made at the annual meeting of the police representative body in Northern Ireland, when Mr. Alan Wright said that the financial cuts were hindering the RUC in their campaign against terrorism, and that the deplorable state of some border police stations was telling against the morale of the RUC?

Mr. Hurd: I have noted those remarks, and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State was present at the dinner. There have been no financial cuts, in the sense that the RUC now disposes of greater financial resources than ever before. I understand what Mr. Wright said about the need for the renovation and replacement of buildings, and £20 million has been designated for that purpose for each of the next three years. That will match the needs created by the rapid expansion of the RUC in recent years.

Ms. Clare Short: Did the Secretary of State see the editorial in *The Economist* and think about its implications for security? It suggested that the Government were wrong to refuse to meet elected Sinn Fein representatives. Does he agree that it is a better democratic principle to meet the representatives of all elected parties than for the Government to pick and choose which representatives they find acceptable?

Mr. Hurd: I am a little puzzled about *The Economist*. In one article it advises us not to talk to Dublin any more, and in another, as the hon. Lady said, it advises us to talk to Sinn Fein. I am clear that there is no purpose in deceiving ourselves that any conversations with Sinn Fein representatives would turn members of the Provisional IRA into decent, law-abiding citizens. In my view, that is not a possibility. The policy which I pursue is clearly different from that practised by the hon. Lady, though not, as I understand it, by her Front Bench spokesmen, who took an aeroplane to London before the embarrassing meeting took place. The policy in which I believe is that we should use every means within the law to distinguish between those in Northern Ireland who believe in and practise constitutional means and those who connive at violence.

Mr. Moynihan: Is my right hon. Friend content with the present practice in relation to marches and parades in the Province?

Mr. Hurd: I have not lived through a marching and parading season yet, but I am uneasy about the present

position. The policing of marches and parades on the present scale places a heavy burden on the police and in some cases, not all, can provoke sectarian conflict. Those who wish to see the police concentrate on the basic security problems of saving lives and protecting the community should think rather more carefully about the way in which some, not all, of those parades are organised and the burden that they place upon the RUC.

Mr. Alton: Despite Sir John Hermon's repeated statements that he wants to see an improvement in relations between the RUC and the Garda, does the Secretary of State agree that such an improvement will not be helped by public recriminations and by the apportioning of blame by the RUC or by the Garda?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I agree with that. It is inevitable that occasionally feelings run high and that there are misunderstandings. Those produce statements and further misunderstandings. I do not believe that any of those principally involved believe that that is a sensible way to carry on.

Rev. William McCrea: Will the Secretary of State bear in mind the serious statement made by the Sinn Fein chairman of Omagh council, who claimed that if ordinary Northern Ireland council workmen don the Queen's uniform and are part-time members of the security forces and the IRA say that they are legitimate targets, he is happy to abide by that? What action will the Secretary of State and the Government take against Provo Kerr, and what protection will they give to my constituents who happen to be part-time members of the security forces and work for Omagh council? When shall we see an end to the mockery of Sinn Fein-IRA vampires in our councils in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Hurd: Anyone in Northern Ireland, whether a councillor or not, is under the law, and any remarks made or any membership of any illegal organisation—whether the person involved is a councillor or not—fall to be examined by the police and prosecuting authorities in the same way as with any other citizen. I hope that people who make the kind of highly objectionable and disgusting remarks to which the hon. Gentleman referred have that point well in mind.

Mr. McCusker: In view of the fact that the armed wing of Sinn Fein has murdered three councillors in County Armagh, an hon. Member and a Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly, what measures has the Secretary of State taken to protect other councillors, council officials and council workers in the Province?

Mr. Hurd: The level of personal protection accorded to personalities in the Province who may be under threat is plainly something that the RUC studies constantly, sometimes adding and sometimes subtracting protection as it assesses the threat. With his long experience, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that that is the only sensible way to proceed.

Sir John Farr: While the House is pleased to hear my right hon. Friend's comment about cross-border co-operation, is it not a fact that the two chief officers of police have not met for more than two years, and that, however good that co-operation may be today, it would be much better if the two chief officers of police could be persuaded to get together more frequently?

Mr. Hurd: It is true that the co-operation that exists and is particularly strong in the border areas would be buttressed and re-inforced if there was more regular contact and co-operation at senior levels of the police forces. It should become a matter of course, without need for publicity or notice, that the commanders of the two police forces occasionally meet.

Mr. Archer: For the avoidance of doubt, will the Secretary of State accept that the return to London yesterday of my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) and me for an evening engagement was arranged before we knew the timetable of the working group and the order in which it was seeing delegations. However strongly the right hon. Gentleman may disagree, as we all do, with some of the views expressed by Sinn Fein, does he accept that the essence of democratic and constitutional politics, in which we all profess to believe, is listening to people with whom we disagree? In particular, can the right hon. Gentleman justify refusing to talk to elected councillors about health and safety matters? Does he agree that those whose reaction to every circumstance is to throw a tantrum and walk out can hardly complain if they are seen as being more interested in dramatic discord than genuine understanding?

Mr. Hurd: I am sorry to hear the right hon. and learned Gentleman's explanation, because it means that he associated himself with the Labour party delegation's decision that it was right to receive Sinn Fein. I simply repeat what I believe to be the right attitude for people in positions of responsibility, which is to distinguish to the maximum extent permitted by the law between those, whether we agree with them or not, who practise constitutional means of arguing their objectives and those who connive at violence.

Mr. Hume: Is the Secretary of State aware of the recent cross-border incursions by British soldiers into County Louth and the consequences of it? Is he further aware that there have been many such incursions, that they are always one way, and that the soldiers always give the same reason—a map-reading error? What conclusions does the Secretary of State draw from the fact that the only soldiers in Ireland who appear to be able to read maps are Irish soldiers?

Mr. Hurd: I am not so sure that there are many Irish soldiers in those areas. The hon. Gentleman is correct in drawing attention to an error that was made and has been acknowledged by the Army. He spoke of "consequences", and he may be talking about a certain tap and oil supply. I have no evidence to lead me to suppose that that incident had anything to do with the British Army.

Kilroot Power Station

2. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement about the decision to convert the Kilroot power station to burning coal and lignite.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): The decision to convert the first phase of Kilroot power station to dual solid fuel—oil firing was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel

Grove (Mr. Arnold) on 22 May 1985. It has been widely welcomed in Northern Ireland as a first step towards reducing the costly dependence on oil.

Mr. Chapman: I warmly welcome the decision to use lignite mined in Northern Ireland to fire a power station there. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that makes good sense economically, and that it will lead to a reduction of sulphur dioxide emissions from that power station compared with other conventional coal-fired power stations in the United Kingdom? If that is the case, is he aware that his Department is taking a welcome lead by setting an example to other Departments in playing a part in reducing what could be the severe effects of acid rain in the United Kingdom and acid rain exported to Scandinavia?

Dr. Boyson: I am delighted to be a crusader in the House for clean air by the conversion of Kilroot power station to coal. The sulphur content of heavy fuel oil is 3 per cent., of coal 1 per cent., and of lignite in Northern Ireland 0·2 per cent. Therefore, the conversion of Kilroot to coal will cut by one third the amount of sulphur pollution. If we can eventually move to lignite production in the Crumlin area, we shall cut the sulphur content again by about 40 per cent.

Mr. Wilson: As the Ayrshire coalfield had hoped to supply coal to Kilroot power station, will the Minister say what proportion of the solid fuel will be composed of lignite and what proportion will be occasioned by the burning of Ayrshire coal?

Dr. Boyson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that supplementary question and I know that the NCB and the coal miners welcome the switch of Kilroot to coal. The intention of the switch at the outset is completely to coal. The transfer will cost £94 million and the saving will be between £25 million and £30 million a year. It will, therefore, pay for itself within three or four years—a relationship with capital expenditure currently almost without equal. If we decide eventually that lignite is right, and the test at the West Belfast station has not yet been completed, it will be used first not at Kilroot but near the mine. The intention for the foreseeable future, though not necessarily for the long-term future, is to use coal at Kilroot.

STC Monkstown

3. **Mr. Beggs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if discussions have taken place between Government Ministers, the chairman and chief executive of STC and trade union officials regarding job losses at STC Monkstown, Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: In the course of the past few months I have had discussions with STC's chairman, the Monkstown factory work force representatives and the Northern Ireland committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. I have also corresponded with STC's chairman. I have stressed my concern to secure the future of the factory and have promised that the Industrial Development Board of Northern Ireland will do all it can to help the company in its efforts to increase the factory's efficiency and to bring in new products.

Mr. Beggs: I thank the Minister for his efforts so far. Does he accept that the privatisaton of British Telecom and the policy of purchasing from foreign companies contributed to the loss of 345 jobs in 1984 and will contribute to further job losses totalling 550 this year? Will he undertake to press the board of STC further to encourage the company to allocate products for manufacture at the Monkstown plant in Northern Ireland? May we be assured that the centralisation of STC activities in London is not a precursor to its withdrawal from Northern Ireland?

Dr. Boyson: The answer to the first part of that supplementary question is that the Government are committed to a policy of free competition within the telecommunications sector. It is up to the manufacturing companies to exploit the opportunities available to them within that framework. The problem in relation to STC, as raised in the second part of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question, is that we have products there which have been sold in the past and are selling now. We need new products which will sell in the future. The whole problem of the Northern Ireland economy, of which the IDB is aware, is the need to encourage the development, by STC and other companies, of products that will sell in Northern Ireland, in Great Britain and throughout the world in the coming 20 to 30 years.

Crumlin Road Court (Trial)

4. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make arrangements to pay an official visit to observe a trial involving evidence from a self-confessed terrorist at the Crumlin road court.

Mr. Hurd: No, Sir.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware that many people regard the present system of juryless trials at the Crumlin road court as outrageous? It would be appropriate for him to pay a visit to see the way in which trials take place, with no jury, where the decision is made solely on the word of a supergrass witness who stands to benefit from giving evidence, and where only the judge makes the decision. How much money has been paid in the last four years to supergrass witnesses for their evidence in such circumstances?

Mr. Hurd: The figure for which the hon. Gentleman asks, £1·3 million in recent years, has previously been given in the House. The answer to the main point of his supplementary question is that the matter must be seen against the background of terrorism and the struggle to protect the citizens of Northern Ireland. Terrorism has in the past included the intimidation of jurors, and that is why the recent Baker report concluded that the Diplock courts should continue. The uncorroborated evidence of which the hon. Gentleman complains is admissible in England and Wales, under federal law in the United States and in many Western countries. It is for the court to decide how much weight should be placed on that evidence. It is much better that the court should decide than that politicians or others outside the court should decide.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who believe that the Maguires and Bernard Conlans were erroneously convicted of terrorism by an English court with an English jury, also believe that they would probably have been acquitted if they had been tried in Northern Ireland by a Diplock court with a greater knowledge of explosive cases?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend will not expect me to follow him too closely down the Maguire trail. However, it is true, and it is a notable figure, that of those in Northern Ireland who pleaded not guilty before the courts, 50 per cent. were acquitted by a jury, and a higher proportion, 53 per cent., were acquitted in Diplock courts.

Mr. Molyneaux: In view of the Government's rejection of the principle of joint sovereignty, will the Secretary of State also reject the Dublin proposals for the involvement of, and a role for, the Republic's judges in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Hurd: I have noticed a flurry of speculation in the press, including the lead story in *The Irish Times* today. It is difficult to comment in the House or in public on discussions between Governments that are going on all the time and are confidential, but the right hon. Gentleman is too shrewd a hand to allow himself to be carried away by such speculation.

Mr. Stanbrook: Does not recent experience, including the acquittal of several alleged terrorists at trials where accomplice evidence has been admitted, show that the judiciary of Northern Ireland is well aware of the dangers of convicting on uncorroborated evidence of accomplices, and that its quality is at least as high as that of the judiciary in the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hurd: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend and I am grateful for that comment.

Mr. Flannery: Is it not a violation of both natural and legal justice that some self-confessed murderers are literally being paid to give evidence that will save their skins, and are doing so in trials without juries? The right hon. Gentleman said that it is all right for that to happen in England and Wales, but he omitted the fact that there are juries in England and Wales but not in Northern Ireland. Is he going to do nothing to set right such a travesty of justice in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Hurd: I am looking, as the hon. Member knows, at the Baker report's proposals and I shall soon, I hope, be able to tell the House the way in which my mind is working. I am sure that it would be wrong, and a false service to the citizens of Northern Ireland, if we were either to abolish the Diplock courts and go back to the intimidation of jurors, or to pass extraordinary provision by which Parliament would rule out uncorroborated accomplice evidence, however much a court might later wish to assess its weight. That would be an extraordinary and untoward decision.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the right hon. Gentleman keep in mind that opposition to the supergrass system comes not only from Republicans, but, almost unanimously, from the Unionist side of the House? Does he not realise that the Unionist side would defend a proper legal system, which is one of the systems under which we have to work? By taking uncorroborated evidence, the system under which we want to live is seriously weakened.

Mr. Hurd: I agree that the sooner we can work toward the restoration of, or at least an increase in, jury trials, the more that everybody in the House and Northern Ireland will be pleased. The hon. Gentleman knows the proposals which the Baker report made in that direction, which I am weighing. I return to the basic point, which is that so long as intimidation of jurors is a problem in Northern Ireland we would be rash to suppose that we could reconcile justice with an untrammelled restoration of the jury system.

Mr. Hume: May I remind the Secretary of State that this question is about the use of supergrasses and that the vast majority of the citizens of Northern Ireland, to whom he referred, in both sections of the community, regard the supergrass system, according to recent opinion polls, as a very serious travesty of justice.

Mr. Hurd: Let us suppose that a terrorist had committed a terrorist crime and that the only evidence available to bring him to justice was the evidence of one of his accomplices. As the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) said, it is not a matter of which community he belongs to. It would be very hard to say that that person could not be brought to justice even if the evidence of his accomplice would carry great weight in the court. Surely it must be right for the courts, whose independence has been rightly praised this afternoon, to make a decision in each case on the merits of that case.

Cross-border Co-operation

5. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next proposes to meet Ministers of the Government of the Republic of Ireland to discuss cross-border co-operation.

9. **Sir John Biggs-Davidson** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about co-operation with the Irish Republic, making special reference to security.

Mr. Hurd: I met the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Barry, on 30 May. No date for a future meeting with Irish Ministers has been set. I welcome close co-operation with Irish Ministers in areas where we can work together to our mutual benefit. It is essential that we co-operate closely in dealing with the common threat of terrorist violence. I welcome the co-operation that exists at present between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda and I hope that this can be developed further.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Secretary of State aware that many people regard talks between the British Government and the Dublin Government as crucial, not just in areas of security, but in areas covering the whole range of affairs in Northern Ireland? Is he further aware that, as all that we have to go on are pessimistic newspaper leaks that are causing a great deal of dismay, it would be better if the secret diplomacy came to an end and he were frank about what is going on? It would be better if the Secretary of State said this to us instead of always being scared about what the Unionists might say to him if he revealed something about these discussions.

Mr. Hurd: One or two contradictions are embedded in that question. We have frequent discussions with Irish Ministers within the framework of the Intergovernmental Council, and I agree with the hon. Gentleman's remarks about those discussions. We are holding serious and confidential discussions with the Irish Government to establish whether the relationship sketched in the Chequers communiqué last November could be made more substantial. It would not do much good to break off the negotiations at this stage and reveal their contents to the

public. It may be a little time yet before we know whether they will succeed in the form of an outcome that would have to be explained and defended in this House.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Did not the Taoiseach describe the IRA as "our common enemy"? Despite the reported disagreements between the Garda Commissioner and the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, has not the co-operation between those two admirable forces saved many lives on both sides of the border?

Mr. Hurd: That is true, and it is one reason why we should like the existing co-operation to be strengthened and improved.

Mr. Stephen Ross: Has the Secretary of State noticed the good news of the increased recruitment of Catholics — between 10 and 12 per cent. — into the RUC? *[Interruption.]* It is a good step upwards. Is there any possibility of the two police forces holding joint training exercises and getting together to try to reach an understanding of the problems?

Mr. Hurd: There has been an increase in the proportion of Catholics joining the RUC, which I welcome. However, the hon. Gentleman will accept that there is a long way to go before we can be satisfied about the position. A great deal depends upon what I hope will be a growing understanding between the leaders of the nationalist minority in the north and the police force. As for the hon. Gentleman's second question, I should like to move in that direction, but it has to be a step at a time.

Mr. Nicholson: In recent months, 14 members of the RUC have been brutally butchered in my constituency by the IRA. The Secretary of State's words ring hollow in the ears of my constituents. The co-operation to which he refers with the Irish Republic is a sham and non-existent. Does the Secretary of State not recognise that fact?

Mr. Hurd: It is certainly true that the hon. Member's constituency, above all other constituencies in the Province, has suffered grievously in the course of this year. The response of the great majority of his constituents in both communities has been very steady and praiseworthy. I think that the hon. Gentleman went a little too far in his remarks, because I could take him to a place on the border, not far from his constituency, where the local RUC superintendent, if asked about his personal co-operation with his Garda counterpart across the road or across the river, would say that it was good and useful.

Dr. Mawhinney: Bearing in mind the importance to cross-border security and co-operation between the two police forces of a Royal Ulster Constabulary with a considerable number of Catholics in it—and it needs to have more — and bearing in mind also the apparent ignorance of some Irish Ministers, particularly Mr. Barry, about the facts of the case, will my right hon. Friend take an early opportunity to reaffirm to the Irish Ministers that there is a 10 per cent. Catholic component in the RUC and a 12 per cent. recruitment rate, and that he and his fellow Ministers want to see both figures increased?

Mr. Hurd: The Irish know that. Mr. Barry and I regularly find opportunities to enlighten each other's ignorance.

Mr. Bell: Will the Secretary of State accept that the Opposition welcome the fact that the serious and confidential discussions with the Irish Government are continuing? He has not, however, denied the aura of pessimism in relation to the talks to which my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) referred. Can the Secretary of State confirm that Her Majesty's Government will, with the utmost vigour, press the talks to a successful conclusion?

Mr. Hurd: Sometimes in the past few months there has been too much optimism about the talks and sometimes there has been too much pessimism. What I see and experience is a steady negotiation, seriously conducted, on both sides, but I do not yet know and cannot yet tell the House whether it will succeed.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths: Having had the opportunity of discussing with members of the Garda on one side of the border and with members of the RUC on the other side their practical co-operation, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he will accept that at the operational level there is good co-operation, intelligence and information-gathering between the two forces? Nevertheless, will he accept that the recent incident at Killeen has raised some real anxieties among operational members of the RUC, and that there may be a case for some independent investigation into exactly what happened, and whether the four dead officers were set up before they were killed?

Mr. Hurd: There is a police investigation proceeding into what happened and my hon. Friend, with his experience, will not expect me to elaborate on that. I think that the police are the right people to do the investigation and bring to justice, if they can, those responsible for a particularly atrocious crime.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: May I ask the Secretary of State, when in discussions with Irish Ministers on cross-border co-operation, to demand that action be taken against those terrorists who are hiding in the South under a cloak of respectability? Will he take steps to demand that they be apprehended and returned to justice in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. When there is proof that we can adduce, or that can be adduced in a court of law in the North, we do not hesitate to ask for the return of those concerned. As the hon. Gentleman knows, often it is not necessarily a question of proof, which may already be available. It is a question of wanting information that could be useful operationally.

Anti-discrimination Safeguards

6. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to introduce additional safeguards against discrimination in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hurd: A wide range of laws and powers to safeguard individuals against discrimination have been in place for over a decade. We keep a careful watch on the effectiveness of these measures. I have already welcomed the review to be undertaken by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. I am examining information about the relative social and economic positions of the major denominational groups in Northern Ireland. I shall shortly publish data about that and make a statement about the Government's proposals for further consideration of this matter.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I thank my right hon. Friend for his very full reply. Does he agree that outside

interference in that area is not helpful? In particular, does he agree that the adoption by American companies of the so-called McBride principles would not be helpful for employment or equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is quite right. I have been encouraged by the number of people in Northern Ireland and the United States, usually supporters of the nationalist community, who have seized that point and are explaining to Americans that the McBride campaign could damage the whole community in Northern Ireland.

Discrimination in employment in Northern Ireland is illegal. Therefore the best way to secure fresh jobs for the nationalist minority is to secure fresh jobs for Northern Ireland.

Improvement Grants

7. **Rev. Martin Smyth** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what period of time elapses between application for and authorisation of improvement grants; and if he is satisfied with the performance of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in this respect.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Chris Patten): This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive, who has advised me that the average time taken is 15 months. However, progress has recently been made to cut the backlog and that should contribute to an improvement in the time taken to process new applications.

Rev. Martin Smyth: While welcoming the Minister's understanding that improvement will occur, may I ask whether he acknowledges that some people have been on the list for two years and that some of them have died before their applications have been approved? Indeed, the increase in costs has made it impossible for people to proceed.

Mr. Patten: I am aware of the problem. I am pleased that we have cut the backlog, which peaked about 15 months ago, by about two thirds. We are presently reviewing with the Housing Executive ways in which we can target grants more effectively, to take account of both personal and housing need.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: In the context of housing policy, will my hon. Friend say a word about his right-to-buy programme and whether home ownership is in fact conducive to greater stability in society, including greater stability in the Province?

Mr. Patten: I agree with my hon. Friend. We have managed to sell 26,000 Housing Executive homes in Northern Ireland to their tenants. There are 150 applications a week and 100 completions. I think that that should have some of the benefits to which my hon. Friend referred.

Elections (Identification Documents)

8. **Mr. J. Enoch Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what use he intends to make of the power to extend by statutory instrument the prescribed identification documents in the Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): My right hon. Friend is currently reviewing the list of specified documents in the light of experience at the district council elections on 15 May. The Government will in due course consider bringing forward legislative proposals to apply the specified document requirement to other categories of elections held in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Powell: Making use of the blessed interval between elections to which we are now looking forward in Northern Ireland, will the Government be careful to consult all those with practical experience derived from the local government elections a month ago?

Mr. Scott: The Assembly has already had a debate on that subject, and we shall be studying that. We are ready to listen to representations from any quarter in Northern Ireland about the range of the documents electors might produce or, indeed, other aspects of the conduct of those elections.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Is my hon. Friend certain and satisfied that those wishing to take part in the recent elections in Northern Ireland were able to do so and were not denied the opportunity because they had the wrong documents available on the prescribed list?

Mr. Scott: We got the balance about right. The overriding fact is that, as the *Irish News* put it, personation was well and truly buried at this election as the result of our legislation. That was our aim, and we achieved it.

Mr. McCusker: Can the Minister assure us that the Central Services Agency is doing everything in its power to issue a post-1973 medical card to everyone in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Scott: In giving that assurance, I wish also to pay the warmest tribute to the staff of the Central Services Agency for their efforts in putting out more than 50,000 cards immediately before the election.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the Minister keep in mind the proposal put in this House—*[Interruption.]*—when the matter was debated by—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have not finished Questions yet.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the Minister keep in mind the proposal put to this House by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) that those who wished to have their names on the electoral list would have to sign the forms themselves and put their date of birth, which would be duplicated so that the presiding officer could properly check that all those voting were on the list?

Mr. Scott: As I said earlier, we shall want to review the experience of the district council elections and ensure that in future elections personation is as well and truly buried as it was in those elections.

Enterprise Ulster

10. **Mr. Randall** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the planned level of funding for Enterprise Ulster for the financial year 1985-86.

Dr. Boyson: A total of £7·1 million, Sir.

Mr. Randall: Is it not a fact that funding in real terms has increased, yet the minimum target for 1985-86 of 1,000 newly created jobs has remained the same?

Dr. Boyson: What the hon. Gentleman says is broadly true. The cost per individual of the Enterprise Ulster

scheme is much higher than the cost of, say, the ACE scheme. The net cost of the Enterprise Ulster scheme is £1,899 per head, compared with £345 per head for the ACE scheme. The planned level of funding for Enterprise Ulster was set to ascertain how many jobs could be done under that scheme compared with other schemes.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall be attending a banquet given by President de la Madrid of Mexico.

Mr. Hannam: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to consider the growing menance of drug abuse, especially the threatened cocaine flood from the United States? In view of the vast profits that are made from these dealings, will she take the strongest possible steps to deal with drug pushers? When will my right hon. Friend introduce legislation to ensure that any profits or drugs that the pushers acquire can be confiscated?

The Prime Minister: We hope to introduce legislation on this matter during the next parliamentary Session. As my hon. Friend is already aware, we have added 160 new posts to Customs and Excise especially for tracking down drugs. Last Tuesday, it was announced that we would add a further 50 investigators to Customs and Excise to track down drugs. All police forces now have specialist drug units. The police are devoting more manpower to drug investigations. I hope, therefore, that we have equipped ourselves well should there be any diversion of cocaine from the other side of the Atlantic to this side.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister now tell us, honestly and plainly, whether there are figures for gainers and losers from her social security proposals—yes or no? Has the right hon. Lady or any of her Ministers seen such figures—yes or no?

The Prime Minister: As I made clear in my letter to the right hon. Gentleman, the purpose of issuing a Green Paper was to set out—[HON. MEMBERS: "Let us have the answer."] — the main themes and principles in proposing a new social security structure. The proper time to produce figures is when decisions have been taken on the structure. We shall provide a range of illustrative figures when the White Paper is published in the autumn. By that time we shall have taken decisions on the structure. Then we shall provide a range of illustrative figures for the right hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister's refusal to give a straight answer to a straight question will be noted by the whole country. It is entirely consistent with the approaches that she has taken on the whole matter. If the right hon. Lady will not answer that question on gainers and losers. will she publish the report of the pensions review committee, which included Mr. Stewart Lyon, so that the whole country can make a judgment on the advice that was tendered to the Government?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman did not quite expect the answer that I gave. As to the latter part of his question, Mr. Lyon was an expert adviser, but the Government do not always have to take expert advice — *[Interruption.]* Indeed, we could be criticised if we did. I notice that it is reported that Mr. Lyon said:

"the final proposal to phase out Serps was ingenious".

Mr. Couchman: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Metropolitan police have had a 5 per cent. increase this year, that there is a need for an examination into manpower and overtime, and that the police, who have been so well treated by this Government, cannot expect to be exempt from examination of their expenditure?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the police have been extremely well treated by this Government. Expenditure on the police generally has increased from £1·1 billion in 1978-79 to £2·8 billion in 1985-86, and spending on the Metropolitan police has increased from £291 million in 1978-79 to £763 in 1985-86. Against that background, we are justifiably proud of our record in respect of the Metropolitan police and the police throughout the country as a whole.

Mr. James Callaghan: Is the Prime Minister aware that the word "ingenious" is always used of every successful burglar?

The Prime Minister: It is precisely because this Government do not wish to burgle future generations that we are looking at the present scheme to ensure that it is soundly financed by contributions from this generation, rather than staying with the old scheme which would put the burden on our children and grandchildren.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take it afterwards.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: But it relates to this question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take it immediately after questions.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is no injury time during questions, and therefore I shall take the hon. Gentleman's point of order afterwards.

Sir William Clark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that at present contributions from 2·8 workers pay one pension, and that if SERPS is not altered 1·6 workers will in future pay one pension? That is surely an unsustainable charge on such workers.

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that the present SERPS system is deliverable. The burden on our children and grandchildren would be absolutely intolerable, and they would not be able to meet it. As my hon. Friend knows, the expert advice indicated that if SERPS were to be carried on the benefit would have to be substantially reduced, even though the contribution would have to remain the same.

Q2. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Brown: Is the Prime Minister aware that the "World in Action" programme the other evening said, in effect, that she was lying about the sinking of the General Belgrano——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that "lying" is not a word that we use in the House, especially about one another.

Mr. Brown: Is the Prime Minister aware that "World in Action" said, in effect, that she was not telling the whole truth about the sinking of the General Belgrano? Is she aware that many people regard this as Britain's Watergate, as the Falklands war was used cynically to win a general election and many people on both sides lost their lives needlessly.

The Prime Minister: The whole matter of the Belgrano was thoroughly debated in the House when the Government motion that the sinking of the Belgrano was justified and that the first duty of the Government is to protect the lives of our people was passed without one dissenting vote from any part of the House.

Mr. Viggers: Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity to note that *The Times* newspaper today carries so many job advertisements that a separate eight-page supplement has been printed to contain them, the *Daily Telegraph* carries 10 pages of job advertisements and even *The Guardian* has five? Does she agree that that is a sure sign of a buoyant and expanding economy and is bad news for the Labour party and those whose profession it is to talk this country down?

The Prime Minister: I believe that it is a sign that more jobs are being created. I hope that those who are without jobs will go anxiously after those vacancies and that many more will be employed as a result.

Dr. Owen: As larceny now seems to be the right description of the Government's proposals for the state earnings-related pensions scheme, will the Prime Minister admit that Mr. Stewart Lyon proposed that the scheme should be retained but modified and its ultimate cost reduced, but that that option was not discussed by the Secretary of State's advisory team? Does she agree that that option should now be put to the House with Government figures so that we can decide whether it is viable?

The Prime Minister: I thought from their early declarations on the reviews that members of the SDP were supporting abolition of SERPS very vigorously, but with the alliance one never quite knows. The Green Paper made it clear that one of the options considered by the Government was to restrict SERPS rather than to phase it out. The reasons why the Government concluded that that was not the right option are set out in detail in paragraph 7.9 on page 23 of the Green Paper.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the right hon. Lady take time today to discuss with her right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the plight of the small dairy farmers in Northern Ireland, who are the only dairy farmers in the whole of the United Kingdom with herds of 40 cows or fewer who will have to carry the cruel EC cross of the milk quota?

The Prime Minister: I am very much aware of the problem in Northern Ireland. I believe that too few people took up the outgoers offer. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is considering the matter now.

Q3. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nellist: Instead of attending yet another banquet this evening, will the Prime Minister take time to read the report in today's *Daily Mirror* about a woman who is to have an abortion after breathing in fumes from a weedkiller containing the chemical 2,4,5-T? Having cut the health and safety inspectorate by 20 per cent. in the past four years, will she now support the campaign by the Transport and General Workers Union and others for a ban on that chemical, which was used by the United States as a killer in the Vietnam war?

The Prime Minister: The matter is now under consideration by the Health and Safety Executive.

Q4. **Mr. Forth** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Forth: Has my right hon. Friend had time to study the speech of our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Maurice Macmillan memorial lecture on Tuesday evening, in which he described the emphasis that he puts on wider share ownership and wider property ownership as one of the bases of the Government's policies? Does my right hon. Friend remain committed to the principle that further share and home ownership are the bases for further responsibility in society and for further economic and social progress?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I saw that speech and, as my hon. Friend knows, owner-occupation is at an all-time record because of the Government's policies. Moreover, the number of individuals who own shares has risen rapidly. It fell during the lifetime of the Labour Government. It fell from 2·5 million in 1958 to 1·75 million in 1979. It is now rising substantially. The British Telecom share issue alone has 1·7 million shareholders —a figure equal to the total number of shareholders in 1979.

Mr. Speaker: I shall now take the point of order of the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop).

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop: It is sometimes difficult in the Chair to hear what is being said in the House, but it is sometimes difficult to hear in the House what is being said in the House. It must have been obvious to everyone in the House that the Opposition deliberately drowned my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's answer — *[Interruption.]*—just as they are trying to drown this point of order. They succeeded in drowning my right hon. Friend's reply to the somewhat mischievous question of an ex-Prime Minister. [HON. MEMBERS: "Mischievous?"] I raise this point of order—*[Interruption.]* I am happy to wait.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will put his point of order to me.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I shall put it when I can be sure that you can hear it, Mr. Speaker. [HON. MEMBERS:

"Oh."] I rose on a point of order earlier to ask you to enable the Prime Minister to repeat her answer so that the House and the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), who asked the question, could be allowed to hear her answer.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point. Over the centuries our predecessors have fought for freedom of speech in this place and it is a very bad example to others if we fail to preserve that freedom. It is perfectly true that Prime Minister's questions have been very noisy, but I had detected a rather better tone of Prime Minister's questions in the past several weeks and I hope that that will continue.

Business of the House

3.35 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I, within your hearing, Mr. Speaker, ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business of the House for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 17 JUNE—A debate on a Government motion to approve the White Paper on Airports Policy, Cmnd. 9542.

TUESDAY 18 JUNE—A debate on a Government motion on the Green Paper on the Reform of Social Security, Cmnd. 9517-9.

WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE—Opposition Day (15th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition Motion entitled "Government Imposed Price Increases".

Motion on European Community Document 9402/84 on quick frozen foodstuffs.

THURSDAY 20 JUNE—There will be a debate on a Government motion on the White Paper on Developments in the European Community July-December 1984, Cmnd. 9485, on the report of the Dooge Committee on Institutional Affairs, and on Community Documents 11911/1/81 (on a conciliation procedure between the European Assembly Council and the Commission), on 10350/82 (on stronger action in the cultural sector), and on 8667/82 and 4469/85 on controls and formalities at Community borders.

FRIDAY 21 JUNE—A debate on small firms which will arise on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 24 JUNE—Opposition Day (16th Allotted Day)—subject to be announced.

[European Community Documents to be debated

Wednesday 19 June

(a) 9402/84 Quick frozen foodstuffs

Thursday 20 June

(b) Unnumbered Report of Dooge Committee on EC Institutional Affairs

(c) 11911/1/81 Conciliation procedure between Community Institutions

(d) 10350/82 Communication concerning stronger action in the cultural sector

(e) 8667/82 Frontier checks on Community citizens

(f) 4469/85 Frontier checks on Community citizens

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 5–iv (1984-85), paragraph 4.

(b) HC 5–xxi (1984-85).

(c) HC 21–xix (1981-82)

(d) HC 34–xv (1982-83)

(e) HC 34–i (1982-83) and HC 78–xxviii (1983-84)

(f) HC 5–xvi (1984-85).]

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. First, may I ask him to ensure that the statement on the social security benefits uprating is made next Monday so that in the debate on the Government's Green Paper on the reform of social security the House can have all the relevant information on the most recent uprating to hand?

Secondly, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman for a debate in Government time on the immigration rules, taking into account both the European court judgment and the new restriction on Tamils?

Thirdly, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a debate in Government time on the crisis facing the arts, caused by the unexpected shortfall of £30 million that has resulted from the Government's failure properly to estimate the effects of the abolition of the Greater London and metropolitan county councils? *[Interruption.]* While considering that matter, will the right hon. Gentleman disregard the philistines who heckle from Conservative Benches?

Finally, it is now 13 weeks since the violence at the Luton-Millwall match and the statement by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, who is responsible for sport, and two weeks since the horrific incidents at the Heysel stadium in Brussels and the Government's promise to take effective measures. As it is now only 10 weeks to the start of the new football season and five or six weeks until the summer recess, when will we have the necessary discussions about the Government's legislation and their other proposals for dealing with football hooliganism?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that we in the Opposition want strong, urgent and effective action to be taken in that matter? Those objectives can be best achieved by joint effort and maximum agreement. In pursuit of that, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that there is joint discussion, maximum information and, very important, adequate time for legislation?

Mr. Biffen: I recognise the importance of the uprating statement in the context of the debate on the social security proposals. Perhaps we can look at that matter through the usual channels.

On the second point, while no announcement has been made about a debate on immigration reflecting the problems of the Tamils and recent judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, I accept that the topic is important.

Thirdly, in the context of the arts, perhaps I will be allowed to say this—and I believe that this sentiment will be widely echoed throughout the House. I should like to express our great pleasure at the donation that has come today to the National Gallery through the Getty Foundation. I note what the right hon. Gentleman said about a debate concerning public sector provision for the arts. Again, perhaps we can look at that matter through the usual channels.

Finally, I am most anxious to join the right hon. Gentleman in underlining the importance of consultation and maximum agreement on legislation on alcohol in respect of football matches. I shall do what I can to move matters in the direction that he seeks.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): On next Tuesday's debate on the social security Green Paper, is my right hon. Friend aware that more than 129 right hon. and hon. Conservative Members have signed early-day motion 653, which urges the House to endorse the principle of an integregated tax-benefit system?

[That this House endorses the principle of an integrated tax-benefit system; and urges Her Majesty's Government to use the present review of social security and the forthcoming Green Paper on personal taxation as an opportunity to take the first steps towards that objective.]

Will he ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is made fully aware of that broad-ranging support?

Mr. Biffen: I shall be happy to concur with what my hon. Friend seeks.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Surely the House will not be denied the opportunity to debate and have a separate vote on the humanitarian issue of the immigration rule changes that will effect the Tamil community. Does the Leader of the House, whose responses to the matter have been sympathetic, recognise that to embrace the matter within a wider debate would be to confuse that debate and to deny the House an opportunity that it should have?

Mr. Biffen: I am happy to repeat now the sympathy that I expressed last week.

Mr. Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): On next Monday's business, will my right hon. Friend make room for the debate to continue for about a further hour so that more hon. Members may be able to contribute and Mr. Speaker may be assisted in his selection of hon. Members who should speak?

Since the past year has seen unprecedented threats to public order and an unprecedented increase in violent crime, is it not time that we had a proper debate on the relationship between the resources available to the police and the demands placed upon them, which are, frankly, becoming too great?

Mr. Biffen: I acknowledge the authority with which my hon. Friend speaks about the police, but I hope that he will understand when I say that I cannot offer the immediate prospect of a debate in Government time on that topic. I shall, of course, keep the matter in mind.

As to my hon. Friend's request with regard to the airports debate, I am sure that we can consider through the usual channels the virtues of extending the debate, perhaps until midnight.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that the Scrutiny Committee will be glad that there is to be a debate next Thursday on the Dooge report, which leaves plenty of time before the Milan summit? Is he further aware that the Committee's 21st report, published today, includes a summary of its views on this matter? There have been press reports of additional proposals from the Foreign Secretary. Will they be available to hon. Members before next Thursday's debate?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's kind remarks about the arrangements that have been made to debate the Dooge report before the European Council meeting. I shall look into his second point.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Would my right hon. Friend be good enough to think again about the role, in its broadest aspects, of the European Court of Human Rights, which is so different from our system, which is thoroughly un-English and which may lead us into an awful mess?

Mr. Biffen: No time has been made available next week to enable the House to debate the shortcomings of the European Court of Human Rights, and I cannot offer any prospects of an early debate in Government time. It is a subject well suited to my hon. Friend's private enterprise.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Foreign Secretary to make a statement as soon as possible disassociating the British Government from the decision of the United States Congress to give financial aid to the Contras? In view of the increasing possibility of American intervention in Nicaragua, and because of the extreme danger of such an event, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange an early debate on the matter?

Mr. Biffen: I would mislead the hon. Gentleman if I suggested that there were any prospects of an early debate in Government time, but I shall draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary to the points that he has raised.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, although many people would abhor a police state, they believe that the availability of identity cards could be a critical part of the fight against terrorism and crime in general? Does he further accept that many forms of security card already exist? Therefore, may we have a debate on this subject so that the Government might be encouraged to make available to the public on request a standard identity card, just as passports have been available for decades—

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Biffen: The reception to my hon. Friend's suggestion shows that his first step should be to try his luck in an Adjournment debate and to see what reaction he gets there.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I ask the Leader of the House a question of which I gave him notice? In the light of my Consolidated Fund debate on 19 December 1984, the two books by Graham Smith and Judith Cook and the astonishing articles in the *Daily Star* yesterday and today on the death of the rose grower Hilda Murrell and the possible involvement of British intelligence, does he think that the time has come for a statement on the subject by the Home Secretary?

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for having given me notice that he would ask his question. It is not immediately clear that the articles in the *Daily Star* add anything to what has hitherto appeared in the press, but I shall refer the point that has been made to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My right hon. Friend will be aware that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the introduction of the National Health Service approved list has been not just acceptable but welcome. He will also be aware that in a tiny minority of cases genuine difficulties have been created. Will he seek from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services an early statement to the House not just on plans for an appeal procedure but for the resolution of those few genuine difficulties?

Mr. Biffen: I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health wrote to the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association on 16 April setting out the Government's proposals for an

[Mr. Biffen]

appeal mechanism. I understand that the committee will be responding shortly. I hope that we can take it from there.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Leader of the House give further consideration to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) so that we may have an opportunity to discuss the deplorable resolution passed by the United States House of Representatives yesterday? Is he aware that the Opposition feel that the Government should make it clear that they do not believe that Washington should destabilise or try to overthrow any Government, as in Nicaragua, which they do not support or consider should exist?

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that I can helpfully add to the answer that I have already given. I shall, of course, make it my business to ensure that my right hon. and learned Friend is also informed of the hon. Gentleman's opinion.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Did my right hon. Friend see the excellent letter in *The Times* yesterday from a former British and world boxing champion, Mr. Alan Minter, on values in sport and the need to improve crowd behaviour at sporting events? Does my right hon. Friend feel that the whole subject, linked with general social discipline, should be debated by the House in addition to discussions on the football measures to be introduced by the Government before the summer recess?

Mr. Biffen: The initial step must be to introduce the measures that the Government have in mind and to which the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition referred. If we can get along with those, that will be the best contribution that the House can make.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Does the Leader of the House recall that last week, when I asked for a statement on Lear Fan, he pointed to Question Time this week as being the time to raise that issue? Has he looked at the Order Paper today and noticed that there was no opportunity on it for any questions to be asked on Lear Fan? As £56 million of public money is involved, do we not deserve a statement at the Dispatch Box? Why do the Government persist in refusing to come to the Dispatch Box to answer about the Lear Fan loss of money?

Mr. Biffen: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has not had the opportunity that I thought, when we had the exchange last week, might be available to him. I shall refer his observations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in some quarters there is growing anxiety about the manner in which consultants within the NHS carry out private operations, about the waiting lists which are maintained, in some cases, it is felt, artificially long, and also about the remission of NHS fees from private patients? Will he arrange for a statement to be made on that matter by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health or for a debate on it?

Mr. Biffen: I shall refer that point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. In the meanwhile, my hon. Friend may like to take the opportunity, if it is possible, to ask about it at Question Time on Tuesday.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does the Leader of the House accept that the House needs an early opportunity to consider the case for urgent improvements to regional policy and changes in the pace and scale of public expenditure to assist coalfield areas where unemployment is already dreadful and is now being so swollen as to present a genuine threat of corrosion and the crippling of our communities? Is he aware that that is making a mockery of any residual attachment of the Government to the concept of one nation?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman raises an important aspect of economic policy that is contained within regional policies. There is no immediate opportunity for debating that in Government time, but he may wish to use the other opportunities that are available to him.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the widespread disappointment at last week's decision to defer legislation to decontrol new private tenancies? In view of the fact that that will obstruct mobility of labour and, therefore, slow down the process of reducing unemployment, will it be possible to arrange a debate on the subject so that many Back-Bench Members who feel strongly about the matter may have a chance to express their views?

Mr. Biffen: I do not foresee an early likelihood of a debate in Government time, but my hon. Friend may wish to pursue the other opportunities available to him.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Given that the Government have termed the social security reviews as the most fundamental since Beveridge, does the Leader of the House seriously consider that one day's debate is sufficient to discuss them? In view of the revelations in today's press that Ministers completely ignored the advice of Mr. Stewart Lyon, the independent adviser on pensions, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the consultative exercise within Parliament is likely to be as flawed and fraudulent as the consultative exercise for the reviews clearly was?

Mr. Biffen: I do not accept much of that rhetoric as being appropriate to next week's business. The social security review is a big topic to be contained within one day, but, provided hon. Members argue succinctly, much good argument can be put forward and resolved.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): May I reinforce the point made both by my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) and in an excellent article by Ronald Butt in *The Times* today? Surely it is completely undemocratic for the laws of England to be made, not by the Commons of England, but by a bench of foreign judges, however distinguished they may be? We must have time for a proper debate to reassess our relationship with the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. Biffen: There is no time made available specifically and explicitly by the Government next week. However, if my hon. Friend could not slip the matter into Thursday's agenda, I would feel that he was not living up to his reputation.—*[Interruption.]* I am aware of his reputation and I am trying to be complimentary to him. I

am trying to say, if I may use a somewhat overworked word, that my hon. Friend has the ingenuity, which is meant to be a complimentary term, to make his point even within that guise.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on yesterday's unsuccessful attempt by Mr. Coleby, a senior member of the Bank of England, to falsify the record of his evidence to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on 22 May——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the Committee has reported to the House yet.

Mr. Sedgemore: Could the Leader of the House arrange for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to answer——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot have a debate on the matter, because it has not yet been reported to the House.

Mr. Sedgemore: With respect, Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether I could finish my question. I am asking the Leader——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Perhaps I too could use an overworked word and ask the hon. Gentleman to be more ingenious.

Mr. Sedgemore: Disingenuously, Mr. Speaker, could the Chancellor of the Exchequer answer a debate on the ground that his denunciation of Mr. Coleby's evidence in the House on 23 May put pressure on Mr. Coleby to falsify the record of his evidence?

Mr. Biffen: So many hard things have been uttered on topics of which I am wholly unaware that I can best assume that the hon. Gentleman has been thinking aloud.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in the name of the Government, hospitals for the mentally ill and disabled are being closed? Will he, therefore, take note of early-day motion 515, which has been tabled by me and signed by 118 right hon. and hon. Members?

[That this House, noting the widespread interest in the issue of care for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped in the community following the publication of the report of the Social Services Committee on this matter, calls for an early debate on the recommendations and implications of this report.]

It asks for an urgent debate on the subject before all the damage is done and facilities for the mentally disabled and mentally ill are closed without adequate facilities being provided in the community by way of accommodation and skilled personnel.

Mr. Biffen: I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to that serious point.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for the Environment to come to the Dispatch Box this evening to make a statement about the actions of district auditors in Lambeth and Liverpool, the results of which are due to take effect this week? Is he aware that Lambeth Labour councillors have had no alternative but to defend the services in the area against the swingeing cuts that have been made by the Government? Is he further aware that Liverpool has made great advances in jobs and housing in the last two years? Does he appreciate that in the view of many Labour Members, trade unionists and members of the public who depend on the services in Liverpool and Lambeth, the needs of the working class in those areas have a higher priority than Tory legality?

Mr. Biffen: I had hoped that the hon. Gentleman would join with me in welcoming the fact that one Labour council after another was now concluding a legal rate. I shall convey to my right hon. Friend his request that he come to the House this evening, but I cannot say that I travel that road hopefully.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): In view of recent abuses by certain diplomats, including a Syrian who claimed diplomatic immunity when, highly illegally, occupying someone's property, will my right hon. Friend provide time for the House to debate the question of privileges and immunities given to diplomats, particularly in view of the number of people now being given diplomatic status?

May I assure my right hon. Friend on behalf of many hon. Members that we were sorry not to hear him defending his stand on the business motion on the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill? Shall we have a further chance to hear his views on the subject, as the House would like an opportunity to debate the Bill again?

Mr. Biffen: On the latter point, I can only repeat what has been said many times—that the Government would not themselves be providing time for that legislation.

In the first part of his question my hon. Friend raised an extremely important point, especially for those living in central London. However, no time has been made available by the Government for a debate on the topic. My hon. Friend may like to take his chances with the Adjournment.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): The Leader of the House will be aware of the appeal that has been made by Mr. Ted Croker, secretary of the FA, in respect of the worldwide ban against all English football teams. He will also be aware of early-day motion 765 tabled by me.

[That this House unequivocally condemning all forms of social violence, deplores the decision of FIFA in banning all English teams from playing friendly and competitive football worldwide, including games against teams from Scotland, Wales and Ireland; believes that this hasty move leaves England in total isolation from the rest of the football world; calls upon Her Majesty's Government to support the Football Association, Football League and the Sports Council in any appeal against this decision; and supports any measures which will help to end football violence.]

Will he ask the Minister responsible for sport to support this appeal against the total isolation of all English football teams from world soccer?

Mr. Biffen: I shall, of course, pass on that suggestion.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I have just received, as I think he and other right hon. Members have, a solicitous letter from the authorities of the House advising me that a nurse and doctor are available should I require their attention? Will he bear in mind, as we get into the hot summer, that we need an early recess, and will he advise us when the summer recess will start? The weather is so bad at present

[Sir Kenneth Lewis]

—we cannot blame the Government for that—that the sooner we start the recess, even if it means returning early in the autumn, the better.

Mr. Biffen: I find that a worrying intervention, because my hon. Friend refers to a letter about medical advice which I have not received. Somebody must, therefore, be making an act of extreme discrimination in judging those of us who will and those of us who will not get to the middle of August.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Leader of the House recall that, on the many occasions when I have referred to the Johnson Matthey collapse, representations have been made from other quarters, notably from the Conservative Benches, to the effect that there has not been sufficient cover by the Bank of England to oversee the credit worthiness of banks generally? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that we should have a statement to clarify the position? It has been reported, for example, that only one Bank of England official oversees the credit worthiness of every bank in Britain. Is it any wonder that Johnson Matthey collapsed without anybody from the Bank of England having been made aware of what was happening? Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that that is in strong contrast to the way in which district auditors have an army of people crawling all over Lambeth and elsewhere trying to stop councils from carrying out the mandates on which their councillors were elected?

Mr. Biffen: I take at once the importance of the present investigations into Johnson Matthey and the items that are related to it. I shall look at the matter and see how soon a report can be made on it.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Was the Leader of the House at the Cabinet meeting when the Secretary of State for Social Services presented a slide show on his proposals for the dismantling of the welfare state? As the Government are denying the House and the public any detailed information about those proposals, if the right hon. Gentleman thought that the slide show had any merit, will he arrange for hon. Members to see it before we debate the proposals?

Mr. Biffen: Unlike, as far as I can judge, every member of every Labour Cabinet, I never comment on what happens in this Cabinet.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that since visa restrictions were imposed on Tamil people trying to leave Sri Lanka to come to this country there have been serious problems for those going to the British high commission in Colombo to apply for a visa? Is he further aware that, at 3 o'clock in the morning on Tuesday, a young man who had attended the high commission to try to get a visa was pulled out of the queue by the police and beaten up at the local police station? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the decision by the home Secretary and the Foreign Secretary about Sri Lanka merits urgent and important debate in the House because of the implications for the future of refugee status for any asylum seekers from any part of the world?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman will recollect that I have already told the Leader of the Opposition that there is in prospect a debate on immigration, which will cover many of the points that the hon. Gentleman has in mind. I cannot offer a debate in advance of that.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): As there has already been a call for a debate on the condition of the police force, would it not be appropriate to have an urgent debate to consider the plight of victimised miners, especially as in Scotland the coal board has consistently refused to reappoint Jack Kane, a recognised conciliator? This is disgraceful and it should be the subject of a debate in the House.

Mr. Biffen: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's interest in this matter, but I can see no early prospect of the debate that he seeks being held in Government time.

Later——

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When the Leader of the House was trying to answer the question that I put to him, the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) interjected a remark to prevent me from hearing the answer.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton : No, I did not.

Mr. Corbyn: Is it in order for an hon. Member, who is about to go on a trip paid for by the puppet Government of South-West Africa, to try to prevent other hon. Members from hearing Ministers' answers?

Mr. Speaker: We have had enough about hearing answers in the House today. It is incumbent upon us to set a good example of free speech. We cannot possibly expect the rest of the country to respect this place if we do not set a good example.

Mr. Winnick: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. What are your powers regarding entries in the Register of Members' Interests? Concern has been expressed outside, and should be expressed inside, the Chamber that free trips for hon. Members are not being entered in the register. I think that you should give a ruling, Mr. Speaker. If an hon. Member is going on a free trip, no doubt he will put in an entry to that effect. That is essential because otherwise, to a large extent, the register becomes meaningless. Will you give a firm ruling that if an hon. Member goes on a trip organised by a foreign Government he is under an obligation to ensure that an entry is put in the register?

Mr. Speaker: The rules governing the Register of Members' Interests are well known to the House. They have been laid down by the Select Committee and every hon. Member should declare his interest. As I understand it, all overseas visits are recorded.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. For the benefit of those rather unpleasant Members who are very happy to take free trips behind the iron curtain—I am making no individual accusation when I say that—I put it on record that on Saturday I am going to South-West Africa as a guest of the multi-party conference of the internal parties, black, white and brown, of that country, to attend the inauguration of the transitional internal Government, comprising the internal parties. I am happy to declare that and it will be registered, as I have always done in the past, in the Register of Members' Interests.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that we have had enough of this. I have a long list of right hon. and hon. Members wishing to take part in the defence debate, and we should really move on to the next statement.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already had one point of order from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. This arises out of something that you said in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). May I have an assurance that, when you said that every trip should be registered, you were saying, from the authority of the Chair, that that is what you would expect in the next compilation of the register? It would be handy if that were the case.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is most helpful in drawing my attention to the rules of the House. He and the House know that it is not for me to interpret the rules on Members' interests made by the Select Committee on Procedure. They are laid down and known to very hon. Member. I hope that every hon. Member will obey them.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether the party of the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) could prevail on him to make a permanent series of foreign visits.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us leave this matter of foreign visits. I hope that the House will agree that it is not wrong for hon. Members to make visits to overseas countries. They enhance our debates and hon. Members are able to come back and express to the House their observations and personal experiences. It would be detrimental to our proceedings if that did not happen.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you accept that it is wrong for the hon. Member for Macclesfield to make incorrect innuendos concerning Labour Members about trips paid for by foreign Governments that they have not made?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) was honourable in what he said. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) made the accusation in the first place and the hon. Member for Macclesfield said that his visit would be recorded in the Register of Members' Interests.

Sri Lankan Refugees

4.2 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware, as the House and the Leader of the House are already aware, of the interest that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and I have taken in the plight of refugees from Sri Lanka, particularly those who are Tamils. May I ask you a question?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may ask me a question, but it must be related to my responsibilities. There have been exchanges about this matter with the Leader of the House.

Mr. Nellist: Can you explain how it is that the Government can introduce changes in—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Although I have many responsibilities, I am afraid that explaining Government statements and answering questions that hon. Gentlemen may seek to ask about them are not matters for me. I cannot possibly answer the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Nellist: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As I understand it, during the recess, changes were made in the immigration rules. A negative prayer against those changes has been tabled by the Liberal party. Therefore, can you explain how the Government can act on those changes before they have been discussed and passed by the House?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me, and the hon. Gentleman well knows the rules about prayers.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

4.4 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): I represented the United Kingdom, with my hon. Friend the Minister of State, at the meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers on 11-12 June in Luxembourg.

The Council resumed negotiations on prices for the 1985-86 season for cereals and rapeseed on the basis of a compromise which was before the Council on 13 to 16 May. The Commission submitted 10 draft regulations to give effect to the compromise, including the proposed reduction of 1·8 per cent. in common prices for these commodities. When the Presidency announced its intention to put these regulations to a vote, the German Minister said his Government were not prepared to accept the decrease in cereal prices. He formally invoked paragraph 2 of the Luxembourg compromise by saying that a very important national interest was involved for Germany and that negotiations must be continued until unanimous agreement was reached.

I said in the Council that I had noted that the German Government supported the United Kingdom Government's view that, where a member state declared a very important national interest, discussions in the Council should continue without a vote. Given the German Minister's statement, I said that, in accordance with our position on the Luxembourg compromise, I had to object to a vote being taken and that I was not prepared to vote or abstain. The Ministers from Denmark, France, Greece and Ireland made similar statements. None the less, the Presidency proceeded with a vote. These four member states, together with the United Kingdom, refused to record a vote. Germany also refused to participate in a vote. The regulations were therefore not adopted.

I regret the fact that the Council has thus failed to take decisions on sensible price arrangements for cereals and rapeseed for the next season. This represents a serious setback to the progress which has been made in putting the common agricultural policy on to a more realistic basis. Careful thought will need to be given by the Agriculture Council and the Commission to the situation that now confronts us.

The rapeseed and durum wheat marketing years begin on 1 July and the marketing year for other cereals on 1 August. In the absence of agreement in the Council, the Commission will need to take decisions on how the markets should be managed.

The Council failed to reach agreement on a draft directive covering intra-Community trade in heat-treated milk. Nor was it able to resolve long-standing differences among member states on the authorisation of hormone growth promoters. However, agreement was reached on the text of a directive on control procedures for hormones. Its adoption was delayed pending further consideration of the substances to be authorised.

Several other veterinary directives were adopted, including an important two-year extension of the special import arrangements which the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland are entitled to apply as a protection

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): First, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman to say a little more about the veterinary points, in particular the state of the discussions upon hormone growth promoters? There are few hon. Members, and certainly not me, who would quarrel with the right hon. Gentleman's constitutional point, that any country should have the right of veto on a matter of national interest. But there is nobody who will not marvel at the sheer obtuseness of the German Government in refusing to face the necessity of cuts in cereal prices, in view of the mounting surpluses and the escalating cost to all member states.

Does this not, however, bear out my warning when the right hon. Gentleman last made a statement: that by reaching agreement on all other commodity prices the Council had thrown away whatever leverage it had and that its tactics were the factor which enabled Germany to reduce the whole of this year's negotiations to a shambles? I hope that this year's lessons will be learned for the future.

Where does this leave the cause of reform of the common agricultural policy, and in particular the right hon. Gentleman's often repeated belief that surplus production can be eliminated by means of price reductions alone? If agreement cannot be reached on a paltry reduction of 1·8 per cent., what hope is there of the Council being resolute enough to impose real cuts? Will the right hon. Gentleman say whether this year's cereals price will be maintained next year, or has the Commission, as was suggested this morning by the *Financial Times*, the power to reduce prices in its capacity as manager of the fund? When will some of the agriculture Ministers realise that there is a national taxpayers' interest in all countries to reduce the subsidy, currently running at £1·3 billion, for unwanted cereals? There will soon be an outcry as subsidies and surpluses mount up. The Council of Ministers will be compelled to do in haste what they are obviously too spineless to do in an orderly way, namely, to cut agricultural production, and agriculture will be the loser.

Mr. Jopling: On the hon. Gentleman's veterinary point about hormones, the difficulty is that there is a difference of opinion between individual member states, some of whom believe that a ban should be imposed on the use of growth promoting hormones, even if there is scientific evidence showing that they are harmless. There are others, like the United Kingdom delegation, who say that we should rely upon the scientific evidence, that where there is clearance for certain substances they should be allowed to be used and that where we are awaiting a report on others we ought to wait for the scientists' report before reaching a decision.

I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has no quarrel about the way in which we responded to the German veto on cereals. I agree with him that that was the correct and proper constitutional procedure for us to follow. I share the hon. Gentleman's exasperation over the attitude of the German delegation, but that made the rest of us appear, to use his word, spineless in view of the way in which the German delegation was prepared to use its veto to block a sensible decision being reached. It would have been much better if we could have given a signal to grain farmers throughout the Community that there would be a proper reduction in prices this year.

The hon. Gentleman will remember, however, that last year there was a reduction of about 3 per cent. in cereal prices. I am still not without hope that we can continue to press for a 1·8 per cent. reduction which would amount to a reduction just short of 5 per cent. in two years. During this period production costs in very many countries have

increased by perhaps 10 per cent. There has, therefore, been a squeeze on cereal prices in the last two years, when surpluses have been mounting.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Were cereal quotas discussed during the negotiations? Can the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that they will not be sprung on the industry, as they were in the case of milk, which led to confusion and dislocation?

Mr. Jopling: Cereal quotas were not discussed during this Council meeting, but in the past I have brought the discussion around to this point. The majority of Ministers in the Council of Ministers are, I believe, very strongly opposed to cereal quotas. We have to try to get the Community to understand that the best way to control the growing surplus of grain is to cut cereal prices.

Sir Peter Mills (Torridge and Devon, West): Although I support the stand taken by my right hon. Friend the Minister in Brussels, particularly over ensuring that there is a cut in cereal prices, how, in view of this failure, can markets be managed in future? Cereal farmers must be given guidance about the future. What can be done to assist them between now and when a decision is made, bearing in mind that already there are huge surpluses and that there will soon be another grain crop?

Mr. Jopling: I think that the Commissioner understands the need to take urgent action to deal with these matters. In particular, he said yesterday that the Commission would shoulder the responsibility of ensuring that there is not undue speculation in grain because of the legal vacuum. I believe that the Commissioner is well aware of the problems to which my hon. Friend referred, and I hope that we shall be getting some announcements from the Commission very soon.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Will my right hon. Friend enlighten us as to why the sensible British proposals for the reform of the CAP are either voted down or vetoed by what we are pleased to call our Community partners? Does not the German veto exercised yesterday mean that any serious prospect of reform in the CAP may now be declared kaput, and that as the only real control on agricultural spending is the ceiling of resources available to the Community, the only way to get any reform whatever is not to propose or support any increase in the own resources of the Community?

Mr. Jopling: I can say only that if it had not been for the financial discipline that is now imposed upon the common agricultural policy my guess is that we should have been discussing, at this Council in Brussels, considerably more expensive policies than those that we are facing.

The financial disciplines are biting very hard on the common agricultural policy, and rightly so. The main reason why we were unable to get realistic decisions was the German attitude and the German Minister's statement that he was not prepared to accept anything that might depress farm incomes in Germany. I was able to tell him that if we put off taking tough decisions now the dangers were that there would be much bigger drops in farm income throughout the Community in a year or two.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): As Her Majesty's Government support the principle of a veto on matters regarded as being of outstanding national interest, will the Minister agree that, in view of the changing and varying social and agricultural conditions to be found in the now 12 EC countries, the moral of the event points to greater flexibility, and perhaps the permission to use national aids and national expenditure when a country wishes to have a supplement over and above common agricultural policy objectives?

Mr. Jopling: I hope that we shall not move towards a more national base under the common agricultural policy. I hope that very soon the member states of the Community will understand that, unless the common agricultural policy returns quickly to realism, we shall have to think fundamentally about the future of that policy.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): In view of what my right hon. Friend said about oilseed rape, and the fact that the harvesting year starts on 1 July, what advice will he give to farmers who are waiting to market that valuable crop? Are they to wait until he makes a decision, or are they to wait upon the Commission telling us what price they are to receive?

Mr. Jopling: As I have said, the Commissioner told us yesterday that the Commission will shoulder its responsibilities in the legal vacuum which has so unfortunately arisen. I hope that very soon the Commission will give some proper guidance to farmers as to the way in which it intends to manage the market.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Why does the Minister so conspicuously avoid giving any advice to the Commission this afternoon on how it should apply the guaranteed threshold and how it should manage the market, which is now completely disrupted by his failure to reach agreement?

Mr. Jopling: That was a particularly silly remark, if I may say so. The Commissioner has been sitting in the Council day after day and night after night, listening particularly to me explaining to the Council of Ministers what I believe should happen and how we should return to realism, especially in terms of grain prices.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Regrettable though it is that we have no price for cereals, will my right hon. Friend agree that it was infinitely more important to maintain the principle of veto, otherwise we shall not only lose control over agricultural prices but lose control completely over all Community expenditure?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that we could have achieved a settlement if we had been able to move to the German position of insisting on a price reduction of no more than 0·9 per cent., but I was not prepared to do that; nor was my French colleague, and nor, thank goodness, was the Commission.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Does my right hon. Friend accept that this is a very serious setback to the grain market and could cause great confusion? Did he point out to the Germans and the other members of the Community that the most serious threat to cereal prices at the moment is the United States' declared aim of offering about $2,000 billion worth of export credit guarantee to its own cereal growers? Do not the Americans realise that that in itself will undermine the market and push our prices down?

Mr. Jopling: Earlier this week several of us met the United States Secretary for Agriculture. We were able to discuss with him this extremely dangerous trend in world trade. The United States Government made an offer of

[Mr. Jopling]

about 1 million tonnes of wheat to Algeria, which immediately caused a very considerable drop in the price of grain on the Chicago exchange. That has not exactly endeared American farmers to the United States Government's policy. We tried to explain to the United States Government that, while we recognise that they have lost large parts of their food export market, that is largely due to the strength of the dollar rather than anything else.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): What will be the impact of the failure to agree cereal prices in the Community on 1985 budgeted expenditure in the EC? If the German veto—which I support, as the Minister does — means that there will have to be compensating savings elsewhere to ensure that total Community expenditure in 1985 comes somewhere near the financial guidelines, can the Minister assure us that the cuts will not occur in the non-agricultural part of the total Community budget?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful for what the right hon. Gentleman said about the use of the veto and our response to it.

With regard to the future of grain prices, we must wait until the Commission reacts. Until we get to that point —I hope that it will be very soon—it is difficult to know what will be the impact on the market in the immediate future.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman take it from me that the farmers in Northern Ireland will wholeheartedly support him in supporting the veto? To forgo the veto would be a very serious matter and could in the future have very serious implications for agriculture in the whole of the United Kingdom.

Will the right hon. Gentleman keep in mind that the intensive sector of the farming industry in Northern Ireland has been devastated because of low grain prices? Will he do something to make intervention grain available in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Jopling: I will certainly look into that matter, but the hon. Gentleman will recall that I have consistently said that I believe that there is a serious imbalance between the grain and the livestock sectors, and I have been working hard to try to redress that balance.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Will my right hon. Friend accept that we all greatly appreciate his hard work on our behalf in Brussels?

Will he try to clarify for the British farmer where we now stand? Other than the decisions on rapeseed and grain, are all the other decisions this year to stand, such as those on the sheepmeat regime, the beef premium and the other livestock subsidy? We need to have an answer so that we may know where we stand in regard to that sector.

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend will recall that the last time I came to the House I announced the agreement on all the other parts of the package. Those stand, and we are just left now with the grain and the rapeseed parts of the package which are not agreed. Those are the parts that the Commission will have to manage between now and the time when the Council can again properly pick up its responsibilities.

Bearing in mind what the Commission has said and its attitude to a movement towards realism, I do not believe that it will take steps which amount to moving backwards from reality.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will allow questions to continue for another six minutes, making a full half-hour. There is a very important debate to follow the statement, and I believe that some of the hon. Members who have been rising wish to take part in it. Will they please put their questions briefly?

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): During this highly unproductive and farcical meeting yesterday, did my right hon. Friend ask those countries which rightly voted to support the veto what they were doing three years ago when we had a price review stuffed down our throats against our veto?

Mr. Jopling: I did that. I expressed the hope that if, at some time in the future, we wished to use the veto, those countries would remember what they did.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Does the Luxembourg veto apply to Spain and Portugal, which are still in transition? Spain can flood our markets with cars, yet charge exorbitant duties on British cars going into Spain. Why did we agree to the entry of Spain and Portugal before we adopted quotas on wine and olive oil—which could utterly ruin the EC agricultural budget if quotas are not agreed in advance?

Mr. Jopling: These matters were not discussed in the Council of Ministers yesterday. Of course, Spain and Portugal will not have the right to use the veto until they become full members.

The negotiations on all agricultural matters were hard fought until the very last minute. I believe that I am right in saying that the last issue settled was the milk quota for Spain.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that this inability to find agreement on sensible but modest reductions in grain prices will ensure a continuation of the imbalance between the livestock and cereal sectors? It is damaging economically as well as politically for the milk producer, who last year was obliged to accept milk quotas, yet will have to bear the cost of high grain prices.

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend should recall that the settlement we reached two or three weeks ago meant milk prices rising by 2·5 per cent., a freeze on beef prices and a freeze this year on lamb prices, whereas we had been talking about how much we should reduce the grain price. That does bear out the decision to which the Council has been moving, which shifts the balance away from grain and in favour of livestock.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Surely my right hon. Friend would prefer today to condemn the Germans wholeheartedly for an utterly selfish action — the imposition of a veto on a subject that did not really warrant the use of such a grave national reservation. Does that not show, not only for agriculture but generally, that we need to get away from the atmosphere of support of the veto? The more that we get away from that and use the veto as a rare instrument for real national protection, a truly

solemn and profound issue, the more we shall achieve sensible agreement on all things including CAP price reductions.

Mr. Jopling: I plead with my hon. Friend to remember that it is getting into very dangerous country when we start picking and choosing between the use of the veto by various countries. That was the difficulty in which we found ourselves in 1982, into which I hope we shall not get again, because other nations were picking and choosing over our decisions to use the veto. It was right to say that where an important national interest, as defined by a particular Government, is at stake, discussions should be continued without a vote.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will my right hon. Friend consider whether it is really credible to continue to rely on the hope that the problem of cereals will be cured through price cuts, given the disastrous decisions taken during the last day or two in Brussels? Are we not being driven, almost against our will, to a position of quotas? Should we not be preparing for that so that we can avoid a sudden introduction of quotas overnight, as happened with motor car accessories?

Mr. Jopling: We must do everything that we can to avoid cereal quotas. I believe that they are almost unmanageable and almost impossible to control, especially in some other countries in the Community, and almost certainly in this country.

I share my hon. Friend's pessimism as a result of the decision, but one optimistic note is that the German delegation made it clear that it wanted a transitional year of having no reduction in cereal prices. I just hope that that means one transitional year and that, before long, we can return to a position where the Community can move towards a more realistic policy and avoid the build up of huge, unsaleable, uneatable surpluses.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is it not clear that, once again, the budget of the EC will be seriously overspent? If my right hon. Friend is not prepared to use the mechanism of refusing to increase own resources, will he please tell the House what mechanism he will use to force reform of the CAP?

Mr. Jopling: I think that perhaps I should have mentioned overspending when it was referred to earlier. I have been alone in asking the Commissioner, at almost every point of the negotiations, whether he remains satisfied that the cost of the package is within the financial discipline that has been agreed for the agricultural budget. He has assured me at every stage that he was satisfied. I have no reason to believe that that is not correct.

As I said in the early part of my statement, I believe that the financial discipline is already actually very effectively constraining extravagances of the CAP.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Is my right hon. Friend prepared to recommend to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that if there is no indication of a realistic restriction on agricultural expenditure as this year goes on she should not come to this House and ask for any increase in the Community's resources until a real restriction in agricultural expenditure is achieved?

Mr. Jopling: With respect, that is already being achieved by the way in which the Commission has refused to go as far as some member states have been pressing it to go because there is not the money under the financial discipline to pay for some of those policies.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): It is all very well my right hon. Friend talking about financial discipline, but is not the fact of the matter that the Community will spend a damned sight more on agricultural policy this year than last and the only way of stopping that from happening is for the House to say loud and clear that there should be no more own resources until we have sorted out this rake's progress on agricultural policy?

Mr. Jopling: No doubt there will come a moment when my hon. Friend will be able to make that speech in this House at considerable length. All that I can say is that the policy that has been pursued, where spending on the CAP budget must rise at a slower rate than the growth in overall spending, is one to which we should stick, and which the Commission is also in the business of sticking to.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Is my right hon. Friend aware that in just two months' time farmers will be sowing next year's winter crops, and it is likely that they will have to remain in store in 1987, and perhaps beyond with the way that things are going? The Minister must recognise that that position is unsustainable and absurd. What advice is he giving to the industry for which he is supposed to be responsible about the future? How can the Commission manage the market for unlimited quantities of unmarketable grain within its existing budget?

Mr. Jopling: The Commission has moved in before in the event of a legal vacuum to manage the market, so it is not a new position.

The advice that I shall give to farmers is that the Commission has taken sensible approaches to these matters in the past. Clearly, it must have a short time in which to take up its responsibilities to manage the market. I hope that then the proper guidance can be given.

NCB Workshops (Closures)

4.39 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed closure of the National Coal Board workshops at Birdwell and the partial closure of the National Coal Board workshops at Elescar."

Both workshops are in my constituency. They are in the Barnsley and south Yorkshire areas of the NCB.

I picked up this point last night on reading the newspapers, after the House had finished. I should like the NCB to return to the idea of informing Members of Parliament of matters that are of great concern to their constituencies. The closure of the Birdwell workshops will mean the loss of 204 jobs and the partial closure of the Elescar workshops will mean the loss of 211 jobs—415 jobs in total. This is in addition to the loss of jobs recently announced—3,000 jobs in the Barnsley area and 7,000 in the Yorkshire area.

What will be the effect of the closures, not only on hundreds of families, but on the area? The area is seething with discontent and reeling at this savage attack on the coal mining industry, its work force and their families. The Coalfields Community's campaign document and Barnsley district council's appraisal of the effects of coal mining closures on the local authority area clearly show that, for every job lost in the mining industry, another is lost outside the industry.

In the Barnsley area 15,140 people are unemployed, there are 1,011 school leavers and the male unemployment rate is 20 per cent. There are only 217 unfilled vacancies. To the 3,000-plus jobs which have recently been lost we must add the numbers of jobs that will be lost through the workshop closures and through their knock-on effects.

By and large, the NCB workshops are manned by a skilled work force that is second to none—men who have served their apprenticeships in the time-honoured way by learning the skills of the trade. They include mechanical and electrical engineers, fabrication engineers, turners, platers and welders. Many have been retrained in the workshops' rationalisation schemes. There is a young work force providing services to the mining industry from places of excellence. Shops have been modified and re-equipped to carry out that service.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not go into detail. He should make a case showing that this matter is urgent, specific and important.

Mr. McKay: I shall develop the reason why this matter is important. I shall not take long. The services provided by the workshops are well recognised.

Fifteen years ago, a decision was made to close the Birdwell workshops. After instructions from the area director, I had the honour to make sure that the workshops were kept open. As I understand it, the Birdwell workshops are the only workshops within the whole of the area covered by the NCB which have workers with fabrication engineering skills. That is why this matter is specific and important. Where will the work go if those workshops are closed? Is this the beginning of privatisation in the NCB? Those questions must be asked and debated.

Why close the Elescar workshops, which provide hydraulic expertise to the area and which rejuvenate roof supports? Where will that work go? Where will the men go? Closures have occurred on such a large scale within Yorkshire that there is nowhere for the men to go. If the men have to go to other workshops, they will face transportation difficulties. The MacGregor blight is moving across the whole of the Yorkshire coalfield as this butcher carries out the Government's policies.

What about the replacement of the jobs and the £10 million for the NCB enterprise scheme? I should like the House to debate—if you are so kind as to allow me this debate, Mr. Speaker — a paper from the Coalfields Community campaign. This paper shows that, to breathe some semblance of life into the coalfields, the industry needs not £10 million but £2 billion. That is why this matter is specific and important and should be debated.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed closures of the National Coal Board workshops at Birdwell and the partial closure of the National Coal Board workshops at Elescar."

I have listened carefully to the hon. Member's speech. He knows that the decision which I have to take is whether to give this matter precedence over the orders set down for today and for Monday. I regret to say that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House. No doubt he will find other ways of raising the matter.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTION FOR MONDAY 1 JULY

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. David Winnick.
Mr. Barry Henderson.
Mr. Norman Atkinson.

SCOTTISH ESTIMATES

Ordered,

That the Estimates set out hereunder be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee:—

Class XV, Vote 3, Regional and general industrial support, Scotland.
Class XV, Vote 4, Manpower Services Commission, Scotland.
Class XV, Vote 5, Regional assistance, Scotland.
Class XV, Vote 8, Housing, Scotland.
Class XV, Vote 9, New Towns, Scotland.
Class XV, Vote 11, Administration of justice, Scotland.
Class XV, Vote 12, Police grant, legal aid and criminal inquiries compensation, Scotland.
Class XV, Vote 13, Legal Proceedings, Scotland.
Class XV, Vote 15, Education, arts, libraries and social work, Scotland.
Class XV, Vote 16, Student awards, Scotland.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Orders of the Day

Defence Estimates 1985

[SECOND DAY'S DEBATE]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on amendment to Question [12 June]:

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985, contained in Cmnd. 9430.—*[Mr. Heseltine.]*

Which amendment was to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"believes that the plans outlined in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985, Cmnd. 9430, in particular the Government's policies of buying, at an ever-increasing cost, the Trident nuclear system, will inevitably lead to further damaging cuts in Britain's real defence and in our conventional contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; believes also, that in view of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's present strategy of "first use" of nuclear weapons, a reduced conventional contribution will increase the risk of a nuclear war in Europe; calls upon the Government to cancel Trident, to remove all nuclear bases from the United Kingdom and work within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation for a substantial reduction in, and eventually the elimination of, battlefield nuclear weapons; notes with alarm the decline of the Merchant Navy; and urges the Government to take positive and immediate steps to arrest and reverse that decline" —*[Mr. Denzil Davies.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Speaker: No fewer than 32 hon. and right hon. Members have intimated their wish to participate in this important debate. I propose to impose the 10-minute limit on speeches between 6 pm and 8 pm. I appreciate that this may mean that some Privy Councillors will speak during the period when the 10-minute limit is imposed. I hope that they and the whole House will feel that that is fair in the circumstances.

4.47 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Adam Butler): I shall reflect only briefly on yesterday's debate before discussing my main theme. I was struck by the contrast between the two sides of the House — between the confidence and clarity on the Government side, and the confusion on the Opposition side. Most of the confusion came from the Opposition Front Bench, although one has some sympathy for the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) in having to play the almost impossible role of Labour's defence spokesman. The right hon. Gentleman must try next time to find a better argument to justify his apparent support for the use of tactical nuclear weapons at sea, against submarines, and total opposition to them on land.

There was also considerable confusion between the two partners of the SDP-Liberal alliance, especially in the mind of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who seemed at one stage to believe that deterrence could be maintained with an obsolescent system, but later in the debate, if he was not arguing for the continuing deployment of Polaris, appeared to prefer the sea-launched cruise to Trident, which would combine higher cost with lower effectiveness.

I shall be more charitable about the report of the Select Committee on Defence, whose message was expounded in a constructive speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins). The report presents a very definite challenge to the Government, but—and I seek for the politest of words—the Committee's interpretation of the facts is at variance wth mine. What the report does is to draw attention to the potential for savings throughout the defence budget, and it warmly commends my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his great energy in that regard. It makes special reference to the economies which can be, and are being, achieved through effective procurement. This, of course, is a prominent feature in the Statement on the Defence Estimates, and it is on this vital aspect of our defence strategy that I want to concentrate my remarks this afternoon. We can fulfil our defence commitments only if we have an efficient and effective procurement policy.

As the Statement on the Defence Estimates shows, and as my right hon. Friend reiterated yesterday, since this Government came into office in 1979 there has been a substantial real increase in the defence budget as a whole. Perhaps most significantly, the proportion of that budget spent on equipment has risen from 40 per cent. in 1978-79 to 46 per cent. in 1985-86. That is an increase of 40 per cent. or, if expressed in current money terms, of nearly £2·5 billion. Those facts provide the Government with the answer to most of their critics.

With this dramatic increase in the equipment budget the Government have gone a long way to meet the almost insatiable requirements of the armed services and to strengthen still further our contribution to NATO. However, as the sophistication of modern weaponry and systems increases, so does the cost—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Llanelli has only just joined us. I was not offensive towards him, and I would have preferred him to hear the remarks that I made about him. Nevertheless, we are delighted to see him.

Sophistication adds to cost, and while the accent in the last six years has been on making more resources available, our task now is to concentrate on maximising the return from those resources. Our procurement policy is dedicated to that end. We seek the maximum benefit for our armed services, the greatest satisfaction for the taxpayer, and the healthiest state of our defence industry.

Success should be measured not primarily by the expenditure committeed but by the output—by what is achieved for the money spent. To attain that target of best value for money we must operate our procurement policy in as commercial a manner as possible. With certain obvious exceptions, defence procurement is a commercial activity. The procurement executive within the Ministry of Defence must see itself essentially as a commercial organisation in its structures, practices and attitudes, and particularly, of course, in its relations with its suppliers.

The most obvious and important manifestation of this new commercialism is the exercise of competition. Properly used, competition will ensure the most efficient and effective use of our industrial resources. It embraces so much more than just getting the best price for any particular equipment, however important that is. Competition will stimulate innovation and the advancement of technology. It will improve quality and service. While better meeting the needs of the MOD as customer, it will strengthen the efficiency and competitiveness of British industry. Within some of the wider considerations of our procurement policy, our maxim now is, "Competition, unless . . . ".

[Mr. Adam Butler]

Competition is, of course, not new to the MOD, but over the last two years there has been rather more than just a shift in emphasis in ministerial policy. There has been a change of gear, and increasing momentum. The results of this can be seen in the response of industry as it discovers that the MOD has become an increasingly demanding customer. The results can be seen in the way that our contracts are placed—and in the prices that we pay.

Over the past 18 months Ministers have carefully monitored the nature of contracts. The latest results show that the proportion by value of new contracts placed as a result of competition, or otherwise by reference to market forces, is running at more than 60 per cent., while the proportion of those placed on a cost-plus basis is only 7 per cent. of the total. Overall, the total value of work placed last year as a result of competition rose by four to five percentage points.

As for individual prices, the Select Committee chided us for including only one specific example of savings—that of the RAF trainer — in the Statement on the Defence Estimates. I shall now give some more examples of the success of competition policy, but I first enter one caveat. As it is rarely possible to know what we would have paid in the absence of competition, it is difficult, if not impossible, to quantify precisely what savings result from competition or, indeed, to forecast total future savings with accuracy. Nevertheless, we can produce some illustrative and guiding figures.

In many cases details of past savings are regarded as commercially confidential, but, as the Select Committee knows, I have made available to it classified information about a number of contracts where major savings have resulted from competition.

The case of the RAF trainer has been well and publicly aired. There can be no question but that we had a very keenly fought competition, and the estimated cost saving of about 35 per cent. was striking by any standards. That competition produced benefits for the Department other than just the price tag. The contract is on a firm price basis, fixed in cash terms, and with no risk to the MOD from cost escalation or foreign exchange rates. The right hon. Member for Llanelli may also wish to know that competitive pressures on the contenders produced more jobs for British industry, because the companies strove to maximise the United Kingdom content of their bids, while the final stages of the competition produced more offset work against the Garrett engine. We can expect that what happened in that case will happen in other competitions.

Indeed, the basic trainer competition was exceptional only in the interest that it generated, not in its principles. Competition is being applied with equal vigour in other areas—for example, in naval shipbuilding. The recent competition for two mine countermeasure vessels which was won by Vosper Thornycroft resulted in prices that were some 12 per cent., or nearly £10 million, below those included in our costing.

Although the first of class of the new type 2400 diesel-powered submarine — HMS Upholder — was ordered from Vickers, competitive tenders have already been invited for the next three submarines from Yarrows, Vickers, Scott Lithgow and Cammell Laird.

Let me clarify the position of the type 23 frigates. The first type 23 was ordered from Yarrows last year. My right hon. Friend announced on 28 January that Swan Hunter would be invited to tender for the second. Tenders for the third and fourth will be invited at the same time late this summer on a competitive basis from the frigate shipbuilding yards.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Is my hon. Friend not concerned that, even though the type 23 is cheaper and simpler than the type 22, it is none the less three and a half times more expensive in real terms than the Leander frigate? Does that not hold great implications for containing defence expenditure within a zero growth limit?

Mr. Butler: I am well aware of the interest that my hon. Friend takes in these matters, and he is well aware of what we have said about the targets for the numbers of frigates and destroyers. It was because of the escalation of the cost of frigates and destroyers that we had to see whether it was possible to produce a vessel with an adequate capability at a significantly lower cost. Much will depend on the competition. The likely price of the type 23 will be 75 per cent.—perhaps less—of the type 22 which it will replace.

Sir Patrick Wall (Beverley): Will my hon. Friend make quite certain that in future when there is a competition all sides know the rules? He will know that in respect of the competition for the RAF trainer there was a strong feeling that the rules were not known.

Mr. Butler: That competition was carried out totally fairly, but in reviewing the circumstances of it we may well find that procedures will be improved in one or two respects. It is essential to ensure not only that even-handedness is done, but, as so often in such cases, that it is seen to be done.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Would not the most publicly reassuring thing that the MOD could do be to publish the price tags of the final bids?

Mr. Butler: There are arguments for that, and I have raised the matter with individual industrialists. There are some obvious disadvantages, but also some advantages, and I gather that it is practised in some regards in America. We certainly need to consider it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) raised the subject of the OPV 3 in yesterday's debate. When firms were invited to submit their ideas for an enhanced OPV-type vessel within a cost bracket of £25 million to £35 million, it was made clear that this was without any commitment by the Ministry of Defence to proceed. We have looked at the proposals put forward, and those by two firms — Hall Russell and Vosper Thornycroft — are judged to have the potential for providing a vessel of the type specified which would offer good value for money. We think it right to tell the firms the results of the evaluation, and this is now being done. It remains the case, however, that the OPV 3 has not secured a place in the forward defence programme when set against competing priorities for the Royal Navy and for the other services.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, who wound up yesterday's debate, has asked me to point out that with regard to the amphibious vessels as possible replacements for Fearless and Intrepid he inadvertently said that Ministers expected

to make a decision "this year", when he should have said "next year". We need to be sure that these matters are properly understood.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): As a member of the Select Committee, I appreciate the examples given by my right hon. Friend the Minister about the value of competition, but will he take this opportunity to reiterate the importance of buying British and maintaining a British industrial base in these matters? Will he comment on the overall figures, and also say something about procurement for space matters in relation to Skynet and for a future share in the NATO satellite?

Mr. Butler: I was concerned that my speech was getting too long, but I shall be coming to the proportion of our buy which is British. It is very high and I hope that it will remain so.

With regard to land systems, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred yesterday to a saving of some £100 million from the competition for the MCV80. That is a healthy 12 per cent. or so, and in cash terms, which seems to be the standard most used in this debate, it is equivalent to one type 23 frigate.

I wish now to tell the House of another successful cost-cutting competition and to make an announcement. We intend to place a contract with Vickers Defence Systems for the development and initial production of a new armoured repair and recovery vehicle for Challenger tanks. The ARRV is an important force-multiplier and the new vehicle will have a vital role in keeping our tanks in the front line, where they should be. This contract has been won by Vickers after a competition which has resulted in a saving on the initial budgetary estimate for the project of almost 20 per cent. This contract will include production of the first batch of some 30 vehicles. Once development is complete, I intend to meet the bulk of the Army's requirements for ARRV by a further competition. I am sure that the Select Committee and the House will welcome these concrete examples of the success of our policy.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Can the right hon. Gentleman give the cash equivalent for that saving?

Mr. Butler: I cannot give that figure at the moment, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome a saving of some 20 per cent. as a considerable achievement, thus making resources available for other purposes. If the hon. Gentleman does not wish to do so now, he will have the opportunity to lavish praise on the procurement executive and Ministers at the MOD when he makes his own speech.

The defence research establishments have carried out some fine work over the years, but development generally, and especially short-term development, will come to fruition more quickly and at lower cost if it is commercially driven. One of the Government's aims, therefore, is to make the best use of industry's capacity for innovation, limiting what is done in-house to essential activities of which only the research establishments are capable and to longer-term research.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): My right hon. Friend has been very generous in giving way. There is an important Admiralty research establishment at Portland in my constituency. My right hon. Friend will be aware of the worldwide reputation of that establishment in anti-submarine warfare, but is he aware of the effects of the low salaries paid to the teams working there? The Government depend upon the highly qualified staff there to assess the work of industry. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the loss of highly-qualified staff from that establishment to outside industry affects the MOD's ability to make the right assessments for outside contracts?

Mr. Butler: The Government are always worried about the loss of highly qualified staff. The position of ARE, Portland has not been drawn to my attention before, but I know of one or two other areas where a potentially serious situation is developing. I assure my hon. Friend that I will examine the situation at Portland to see whether there is anything that we should or can do about it, and I am grateful to him for drawing it to my attention.

I want to refer to the use of cardinal point specifications in relation to research establishments. Those who follow these matters will be aware of these, but I shall give a brief explanation of them now. Cardinal point specifications are given to industry for a proposed project and contain a brief statement of the essential features of performance and support necessary to meet the services' needs. This means that industry is free to innovate and to propose solutions which meet those needs, but which also best suit their own capabilities and may have better export potential.

This approach is being applied for the first time to a major ship and its weapons systems—the new "one-stop" support ship for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the auxiliary oiler replenishment. Industry has been asked to take part in a design-and-build competition to find a prime contractor for the first two vessels. We are looking to the prime contractor to take on total responsibility for the design, building and fitting out of the ship. Another example of this was Phoenix.

I have stressed the benefits of competition, and they are clear in many cases, but it is not a policy which is applied blindly, and it is not a short-term policy. We have to look to our longer-term interests, and particularly to security of supply.

I shall now deal with one of the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall). Our record of placing business with British industry is one of which we can be proud. Allowing for necessary adjustments associated with collaborative projects, nearly 95 per cent. of our orders go to British companies. Nevertheless, we do not owe them a living. The best guarantee that those companies have of obtaining MOD business is to demonstrate that they can best meet our needs.

In a number of cases, of course, competition will not be practicable for prime contracts, and it is in such cases that we have a major problem to ensure best value for money. One answer lies in requiring the maximum possible level of competitive subcontracting. In the code of practice which we are currently discussing with industry it will be made clear that the proportion of competitive subcontracting in a bid will be a highly relevant factor. I do not doubt that in some cases production in-house may give, or appear to give, the prime contractor the most efficient option. I must, however, issue a warning. Any practice which frustrates competition and prejudices the development of small business will be judged critically by my Department.

[Mr. Butler]

I said at the beginning of my speech that there was a need for commercialism in the MOD. The operation of competition policy throughout our procurement demands a high level of commercial expertise among MOD staff. We are taking steps to ensure that this is so. That is why we appointed Mr. Peter Levene as chief of defence procurement. That decision is already showing that it was throughly justified. We are making arrangements to draw further upon the experience available in industry by the secondment of staff from the private sector, and relevant training is being provided.

I do not believe that achieving lower prices as a result of competition means that industry's profits were necessarily excessive before or that they will be inadequate in the future. That is not the argument. The pressures of competition ensure that industry becomes more efficient, offering a better service to the Ministry of Defence as a customer, and that it is capable of winning more business in a wider field, thereby providing more employment.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): That is not true.

Mr. Butler: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman will not have another opportunity to speak. What he said yesterday was interesting, but I hope that he will not continue to make a speech from a sedentary position.

Mr. Heffer: For many years I worked in the shipbuilding and shiprepair industries when there was competition. The industry declined until the only way to save it was to take it into public ownership. The fact that it continued to decline is not the fault of the industry. The Government did not give it the assistance which they ought to have provided.

Mr. Butler: Nobody can claim that the nationalised shipbuilding industry has been competitive. It was heavily overmanned because it depended largely on a sole customer. Essential as competition is, it cannot by itself be a sufficient basis for achieving the better value for money that we are seeking.

My second major theme is collaboration. I shall deal with the not entirely unfounded criticisms of the Secretary-General of NATO, Lord Carrington. In applying competition policy, we are taking into account our longer-term interests. As members of NATO, it is not in our long-term interests for each member state to develop and produce its own competing equipment. It makes no sense from an operational point of view for the various armed forces to have different equipment, and it makes no sense from an economic point of view for several nations to invest in developing and producing different and expensive equipment to meet a common threat. Resources are wasted through duplication of research and development, and higher unit costs resulting from small production runs make the equipment too expensive for our forces to buy in sufficient quantities, and too expensive for our industries to sell overseas.

NATO members have long recognised the potential military, economic and political advantages of collaboration. Indeed, we have some 20 years' experience of successful collaboration, as the White Paper makes clear. The Tornado is perhaps the best current example of the extent to which we can succeed in a major collaborative programme at the forefront of technology, but to obtain the maximum benefit from collaboration we must progress from an ad hoc and patchy pattern of working together to a more systematic process for securing wider — and more permanent—collaboration.

We must ensure that Europe builds up a competitive and dynamic defence technology and industrial base capable of making its full contribution to the overall Alliance effort. Europe must become more self-sufficient in defence equipment and take a larger share of world trade. Collaboration is the key to that.

While pursuing ways of improving collaboration, we must ensure that competition procurement is also maintained. We must keep in mind our aim — a technically better, but lower-cost product for the Ministry of Defence and a more competitive one for our industries to sell in export markets. That is not an easy task. It would be naive to believe that the needs of different nations can readily be harmonised, that the chauvinism to which Lord Carrington referred will be overcome, or that the interests of national industries will be reconciled, but there should, from now on, be an assumption that some collaboration is called for in all major projects.

Some hon. Members may not be convinced that collaboration can really work, but it must if the Government are to continue to equip our own forces adequately. It must work if Europe is to stand any chance of redressing the imbalance with America, in cost and in technology. Some collaboration is already taking place, but a system of collaboration must be developed.

The European fighter aircraft is in the forefront of our minds, but I can add little to what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State said yesterday. It has come a long way. Many sceptics doubted whether the air forces of five countries could agree on a staff target, but they did. We are determined to bring about this major European venture, if we can. However, we shall not do so to the detriment of British industry. Rather, we would expect the greater export potential of the aeroplane to bring greater opportunities to our aerospace industry.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Is my right hon. Friend aware that we have been saying this sort of thing for year after year, and that it is about time a decision was made?

Mr. Butler: I am sure that my hon. Friend, who must have discovered as much about the project as I have, will appreciate the progress that was made at Rome about the airframe and the engine. However, there is some way to go. If progress is not made, we must consider other alternatives.

A third vital area gives us scope for improving value for money for the Ministry of Defence. I refer to defence sales, which can assist in many ways. The longer production runs which result from sales can give cheaper unit costs for British forces. They assist in maintaining the United Kingdom's capacity in important areas where our forces' requirements are not sufficient to do so. Defence sales therefore make industry less dependent upon the Ministry of Defence and better able to stand on its own. Our success is increasing. One target is to reduce still further the imbalance in our trade with America, which must be one of our most demanding markets. The imbalance in trade between the rest of Europe and America

is as bad as 1:6, but in our case it is 1:2. That is still not good enough and, with further work that is in hand, we shall improve it.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the superb efforts of our diplomatic staff and Army personnel in Washington, who are trying to sell the Americans the mobile subscriber equipment in conjunction with International Telephone and Telegraph Company Ltd., Plessey and Rockwell, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned yesterday?

Mr. Butler: I am aware that they are doing an excellent job. It is a multi-billion dollar project. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) made his contribution during a recent visit to America. We must all pull together on that matter.

Central to the Government's defence strategy and the debate is our policy of independent nuclear deterrence. I do not need to rehearse all of the arguments and shall therefore concentrate on those which impinge on defence procurement. One of the grounds on which the decision to proceed with Trident is criticised is that we cannot afford it. We cannot afford not to have Trident.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): As the Minister is referring to Trident and its cost, will he answer the question that I posed yesterday to the Secretary of State and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement? How will we keep control over Trident when it is in the ocean? Will not the control system be extremely expensive? Is not the control system excluded from the White Paper? If we continue to use the Polaris communication system, what is the point of having a newer system?

Mr. Butler: I should be very happy to write to the hon. Gentleman about that. The present communication system used in Polaris will be used in Trident, but we are working on a new system—the extremely low frequency system—which is very much at the development stage. It is not designed specifically for use with the nuclear deterrent, but it will be applied to the submarines, for which it is most suitable. We are at an early stage, but there is no problem with regard to the communication system, which will be transferred from the Polaris system. I think that the hon. Gentleman is chasing a hare which will not run.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether the ELF development project has been costed, and whether it is within any of the budgets that have so far been presented for Trident?

Mr. Butler: My understanding is that the project is still very much at the research stage and that the first step will be a technology demonstrator programme. At this stage it is impossible to give the cost, and it is not our habit to give costs in regard to programmes of that sort.

I think that it would be better if I did not give way any more, because if I were to do so I would unduly try the patience of my hon. Friends even further than I have already.

We cannot afford not to buy Trident. It is the most cost-effective deterrent that we can buy, and it is perfectly manageable within our planned overall defence expenditure. The cost of buying the equivalent level of deterrence through conventional armaments would be astronomical. Indeed, conventional strength alone, at whatever level, can never be relied upon to deter an enemy who is armed with nuclear weapons.

We have handled programmes of Trident's magnitude before. I do not remember an outcry against Tornado, which was seen as an essential update of the RAF's capability. That programme has taken a higher proportion of available resources than Trident will, and a greater proportion of the equipment spend, both on average and at peak. Those facts are there for Opposition spokesmen or for any other hon. Member to see.

The plain fact is that, thanks to the Government's policy, expenditure on equipment has increased by about £2·5 billion since 1979. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said yesterday, defence expenditure as a whole has increased by about £3 billion in the same period in real terms. Given a level spend, on which the Select Committee's case is postulated, the cost of Trident on today's estimates can be seen to be about one fifth of the additional sums that will be made available over the procurement period.

The expenditure on Trident is large, and we have sought to contain it by commonality with the Americans in hardware and shared servicing facilities, but the critics destroy their case by over-exaggeration. They also point to other likely pressures on equipment spend, and nobody is denying that those pressures exist. While the critics are ringing their alarm bells, Defence Ministers are demonstrating how they will cope with the sorts of problems envisaged.

Procurement is not the only area in which savings can be made, but it is in procurement that the biggest scope lies. As I have shown, through the exercise of competition we are now consistently scoring savings on individual projects of 10 per cent., 20 per cent. or more. It would be unrealistic to suggest that we can achieve this across the board, but on a spend of some £8,000 million on equipment each percentage point saved represents a major piece of equipment or provides a healthy contingency against unplanned demand.

Thanks to the priority which the Government have given to defence expenditure and to our approach to spending, I have no doubt that our forces will be armed with the right balance between nuclear and conventional weapons, sufficient to make their proper contribution to NATO and to maintaining peace.

5.24 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): That was a somewhat disappointing speech by the Minister of State after what we had been led to expect yesterday. Before I refer to what he said, I wonder whether, in his reply, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will elaborate on one major statement by the Secretary of State yesterday which was not pursued to any great extent. It was about the out-of-area exercise that is likely to take place to test our capability. Apart from matters on which we might disagree, such as whether we should have such a force, the House is entitled to know where the exercise will take place, how much it will cost and which host nations will be involved. Today's issue of *The Guardian* suggested that it would in the middle east, that 10,000 men were likely to be involved and that it would be rather expensive. I suggest that the likely location would be Oman. If that is so, the House is entitled to know about the matter, particularly the cost.

[Mr. Kevin McNamara]

Secondly, I should like to refer to the Secretary of State's rather strange tantrum yesterday over the amphibious capability of the Navy. He said:

"I must say a little more about the amphibious capability replacement, about which I have told the House the precise story."

Here is the tantrum:

"If the idea should once get about in the Ministry of Defence that that part of each individual armed service was likely to get preferment over all the rest of the priorities by leaking its concern either to the press or to hon. Members in order to embarrass Ministers in the Ministry of Defence, it would bring our legitimate planning process to a grinding halt. That is precisely what has happened in this case. I am not prepared to be sucked into that process."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 914.]

The Secretary of State was not prepared to be sucked in, yet there has been a correction of yesterday's statement, and we have been told that we might have a statement in a year's time on the future of those vessels and their replacement.

However, the important thing is that that problem arose directly from the Secretary of State's own proposals for reform within the Ministry of Defence. When he took away service chiefs' control over those matters, the forces and services felt that they were likely to be overlooked, and that their case was not properly being heard. Thus they were likely to react in precisely that way. Last Wednesday's *Daily Telegraph* said of the matter:

"Underlying the basic concern that the Chiefs of Staff have lost the right to influence important decisions on new equipment —and thus the responsibility to fulfil their responsibility for combat efficiency—is the belief that it is not right that a central staff general should have the power to direct the choice of a new ship, or that an air marshal should have the last word on the army's next battle tank."

That is what the problem is all about. The article also states:

"Mrs. Thatcher will find that the division between authority and responsibility could lead to a situation in which she might be advised on a task force's fitness for war by a central staff committee free of responsibility for its performance in action."

There was a more threatening, and, knowing the Government's attitude, more sinister paragraph that said:

"There is concern in the Services about the method of selecting and promoting officers for senior appointments in the all-powerful central staff. It is feared that future promotion could be based as much on an officer's ability to work agreeably with government staff as on his military prowess."

We have already seen that in operation in the Civil Service. If somebody is appointed to the general staff on the basis of his agreement with policy, rather than on his ability as a military and serving officer, it would be to the detriment of the services. Under this system that is likely to happen.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): The hon. Gentleman should not believe everything that he reads in the papers.

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman should not say things like that, especially of the Department. The newspapers were correct and the Secretary of State has been in the courts about the matter. He should be careful with such statements. I am surprised he says that about the "Torygraph", which is the bible of the Tory party.

The debate yesterday was on the decisions of the Secretary of State on procurement now that we are nearing the end of the period of expansion—the 3 per cent. development—and are in a zero growth position. The general feeling of the Select Committee faced with this problem was that, after questioning the Minister and Ministry officials, it could not come to any concrete conclusions about whether with the funds available we could meet our commitments, either in terms of deployment, or in acquiring new weapon systems. The report states:

"We had hoped that the Ministry of Defence would be able to demonstrate to us that the scale and phasing of major projects into the 1990s could be made consistent with the likely demands on the defence budget for pay, fuel, stocks and other items . . . We wanted to examine in-service dates, operational life, scale and phasing of expenditure. Our purpose was frustrated by vague and evasive answers and elegant but unhelpful hypotheses."

It gave a list of examples, but it missed a little gem in answer to the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates). The question was:

"Given that *(a)* I think Mr. Gainsborough was very frank when he said five and no more at the moment"

—the regiments of tanks—

"and *(b)* you are going to be able, because of the cost penalty of running on Chieftain well into the next century, even to do that on the budget you have at the moment, I want some idea of what the penalty is in taking the decision that you cannot afford the capital cost to equip the rest of the British Army with Challenger?"

The question was perfectly clear, but it is only as clear as the answer. Major General New replied:

"When that moment comes, and it is not yet, and when the studies have been completed, and they have not been completed yet, and when the international work, which I am quite willing to describe because I am deep in it up to my neck, but not in this open session, has come to its next decision point, then is the moment we decide to go one way or the other. We have the capability of going one way or the other. To what extent we do not know yet, because we have not reached that point."

That precisely sums up the attitude of the Secretary of State yesterday. He adopted the same policy, and said:

"I cannot say precisely how the defence budget will develop in volume terms in the next few years. This depends on a range of factors, some positive, some negative. I cannot engage in a detailed line-by-line, figure-by-figure analysis of the gloomy picture painted by the Defence Committee. . . There is, then, no hidden motive behind my reluctance to disclose all the assumptions being made in 1985 about the programme stretching 10 years ahead and beyond."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 913-14.]

But there is a reluctance. There is something hidden which the Secretary of State either does not know or does not want to tell the House, the Committee or the country. He does not want to tell us, because he wishes to leave those problems to be solved by his successor or, if he hangs on until the general election, by the Labour Government. Even Conservative Members recognise that that is the Secretary of State's position.

I thought that the Chairman of the Select Committee, the right hon. Member for Spelthorne, did a marvellous job yesterday. I have also been a chairman of a Select Committee, when the Labour Government were in power, which produced a report which the Government did not like. I said in the House how marvellous the Government were, and then tore to pieces their policies and strategies. That was done so beautifully yesterday by the right hon. Member for Spelthorne that I am sorry that he is not here today to hear me pay him the compliment. He did it delightfully, and in the best traditional way — by attacking the Opposition furiously, and then carving up the Government. The right hon. Gentleman understood the points being made and the effects of the policies. The fear is that we shall reach a position, by the postponement of

orders, the arrangement of studies and the postponement of decisions, which will lead to the structural disarmament of our forces.

The right hon. Member for Spelthorne pointed out carefully something which the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement did not pick up yesterday evening—the importance of exchange rates in working out our budgets. He asked when will the frigates come, and when shall we fulfil our duties in the north-east Atlantic? Shall we have the number of frigates that the Committee and the Ministry say are needed by 1991? If they are going out to tender, when will the keels be laid? Those are the key questions, and we have received no answers to them.

The hon. Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) mentioned Intrepid and Fearless. If an early decision is not made about them, we shall lose our ability to supply directly our entire northern flank and Norway. We have already heard from the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), my right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) and from the chairman of the 1922 Committee, the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), about the enormous problems caused by the rundown in our merchant fleet. That rundown is as much about structural disarmament as anything else. It is no good saying that, on paper, we can meet our present commitment. We wish to know whether the Government are continuing and developing the exercise started by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy), when he was the Minister responsible for such matters, of going out occasionally to discover where the ships are, to whom they are chartered, whether they still exist, who owns them, and under which flags they fly. That must be a horrendous task due to the decline in our merchant fleet.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): The hon. Gentleman raises an important matter. If the Government argue that there are sufficient ships on the register, that others are flagged out, which can be requisitioned in time of hostilities, and that the laws are adequate for that purpose, the argument can be made the other way round. Plenty of the ships which fly the "red duster" and which are registered in Britain belong to other members of NATO. Will those countries use their laws to requisition ships that are at present flying the "red duster", and will that not deplete further the fleet that we believe, on paper, will be available to our forces in time of war?

Mr. McNamara: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, whose intervention cuts out another two paragraphs of my speech. He makes exactly the point that I was about to make. It is important to know how the register works and to which countries those ships are committed. The Opposition and the National Union of Seamen believe that those problems are not being faced.

Exactly the same position applies to the European fighter aircraft and our need to replace our old Phantoms and Jaguars. We could all echo the point made by the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) and some of his colleagues about the need to make that decision. Other matters, apart from the defence commitment, are at stake as a result of decisions on merchant shipping, weapons procurement and aircraft build-jobs, and the sustaining of design teams and our capability. The longer such decisions are pushed aside, the more at risk such people become. There has already been a call at Warton for 500 voluntary redundancies. The trade unions there feel that that is just the tip of the iceberg. There has been a slowing down of the Tornado project and a failure to decide on the EFA. If we do not have a European agreement but want collaboration, what will the Government do? Will they go for the national option? Some of us would regard that with grave suspicion and would not wish to see it happen.

I echo the words of the hon. Member for Woking. We want an aircraft which meets the RAF specification for defending our skies and not one which depends upon the French.

Yesterday many hon. Members accepted what the Select Committee said. The Government's replies have been evasive. They have not accepted the arguments or faced up to the problems that will result from a zero-growth policy.

Without the full disclosure that exists in the United States, the Government can pull the wool over the eyes of the Committee, the House and the country. Debate in a democratic society must be informed debate. People must be able to make a judgment with knowledge of the resources available and the schemes being implemented. It is not a matter of wanting to know the new secret technology or to tell the Russians about it. That does not happen in the United States, unless someone is a seaman by the name of Walker.

We need to know whether the commitments and decisions being made are equal to or surpass the funds that will be available. That is important. That is why the Secretary of State let down the Committee and the House yesterday when he said:

> "I cannot engage in a detailed line-by-line figure-by-figure analysis of the gloomy picture painted by the Defence Committee."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 913.]

It is the Secretary of State's duty to tell the House and the Committee what is going on.

The Government are trying to find an excuse to bamboozle the House on the effectiveness of their policy on competition. I welcome anything that saves money or obtains value for money in the defence budget. However, I draw the attention of the House to an important statement by the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro):

> "We have made one decision and must make another, and both are crucially important. The first decision related to training aircraft. I hope that the Ministry of Defence will never again embark on a cheapest tender policy. It may have reduced the eventual price well below what was anticipated, but the Ministry's attitude must be to go for the best buy. It is necessary to take into account the quality, specification, performance and handling of an aircraft and balance that against costs. To go for the cheapest aircraft, even if its performance is acceptable, is not to buy the best aircraft for the Royal Air Force."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 966.]

The principle should apply to all contracts entered into by the Ministry of Defence. It is not sufficient merely to go for what appears to be the cheapest.

Now that a decision on the Tucano has been reached, will the Minister tell us whether any of it will be manufactured in west Belfast? Will he also tell us about the battle that is going on with British Aerospace about the debriefing, because as I understand it, while the Ministry would like to regard the subject of the procedures which were followed as closed, the company is still not satisfied about it or about the naming of one of its employees as being the person to whom the information was given. He steadfastly denies that he was given any information about

[Mr. McNamara]

the final date. The procedures should be tidied up. We do not want one of our major companies to feel not that it had been outbid but that it had been cheated by the Ministry. That is not good for the Government's relations with industry. We do not want to see matters continue in that way.

Mr. Adam Butler: I do not believe that the term "cheated" is one that the company would use. It is not one that the hon. Gentleman should use. He asked whether the company considered the matter closed, and it has assured us to that effect.

Mr. McNamara: On what date did the company say that? Did it not ask the Minister further questions after the question had been tabled in the House and the reply given? Is not the company still in correspondence with the Minister?

Mr. Butler: I made the categoric statement that the company has assured us that it considers the matter closed.

Mr. McNamara: The Minister has not answered the questions that I asked, because he cannot. He knows that that is not the case.

We obviously all welcome savings wherever they occur. We welcome them in the new Vickers order. However, we do not know the criteria used and how much money is involved. If the Government are not prepared to tell us that, we must look at the matter suspiciously. Even the savings that have been announced do not reach the overspends on some of the contracts. For example, there was a £600 million overspend on Nimrod. That project has advanced no further and all the problems remain. There have been overspends on the torpedoes, but the problems remain. No savings are likely to be achieved on that project. Will the Minister tell us when he replies whether Mr. Levene's target of 10 per cent. savings across the board on contracts will be achieved?

Employment in the United Kingdom is of interest to us. The Minister claims that he has increased employment by some of his policies, but we have lost nearly 100,000 jobs in the defence manufacturing industries since the Secretary of State has been in office. Those are serious job losses. They are in no way compensated for by Trident, as the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) tried to suggest yesterday. The cost of the jobs created by some of these major equipment contracts is horrific. In Scotland, the cost per job on Trident is £309,000, and on Tornado is £271,000. If one argues for such projects on a job-creating basis, even some Conservative Members would argue that more jobs could be created more cheaply than by pursuing the Trident project.

I should like to consider the subject of Trident in a way different from that mentioned by the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, who made a strange statement yesterday. He said:

"Let me say in the clearest possible terms that there has been no real increase in the estimate for Trident D5 since it was first announced—no real increase at all. The difference between the current and original estimates is due entirely to inflation and exchange rate movements."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 988.]

Judging from that, the hon. Gentleman should be in the Treasury with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It would be marvellous if we could all run our budgets in that way. As the right hon. Member for Spelthorne pointed out, the mere change from $1·38 to $1·26 in the exchange rate was £180 million. If one has a fixed number of pounds which, because of exchange rates, buy fewer dollars and one is buying goods in dollars, there is a real increase in cost. I do not know who wrote the hon. Gentleman's speech, but I would make him pay for that. I am told that the hon. Gentleman is a chartered accountant. I can understand why he came into the House—this Government have always operated a system of creative accounting.

An important question relating to Trident is the Government's attitude to arms control. They believe that we need not bother about our Trident, that Britain need not play an important part in arms control and that we can leave the matter to the Americans and Russians because they have more bombs, warheads and missiles. The problem with that is that the Russians take our attitude and missiles into account. In their negotiations they take into account the commitment from France and the United Kingdom. If there were an argument for proliferation and for other countries to have their own atomic and nuclear weapons, it is contained in that callous disregard and in the attitude that we need only worry about the big fellows having them.

Paragraph 14 of the defence Estimates states:

"the vast majority of the world's nuclear weapons are in the hands of the Superpowers: clearly, therefore, these arsenals must be the first priority for reductions."

It is not our arsenals, but those of the superpowers that must be reduced. If one is not prepared to include those arsenals in negotiations, it is an open invitation to other countries to create their own atomic arsenals. That is a major reason why we are against this country owning any form of nuclear bases and weaponry. If we do, we cannot prevent other countries from forming arsenals or speak to them about it. It is an inducement for the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Churchill: It ill becomes the hon. Gentleman to make himself the advocate of the Soviet view in this case. Since he is well aware that today we have the capacity of guaranteeing on station one single ballistic missile submarine, and that that will remain the case even when we have Trident, what does he suggest for a country committed to a nuclear deterrent, as we are? Does he suggest that we should have half a submarine?

Mr. McNamara: The Conservative party may be committed to a nuclear deterrent, but we are not, and we will not have a nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I am pleased to hear my hon. Friend wholly renouncing nuclear weapons. Will he make it absolutely clear that we renounce nuclear depth charges? Will he educate Conservative Members about what the use of nuclear depth charges might mean for our own ships and submarines?

Mr. McNamara: We do not intend to maintain any nuclear capability, whether it is Polaris, nuclear depth charges, bombs or Tornado. The Labour party policy is not to have any of them, and that is made clear in our amendment.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham) *rose*——

Mr. McNamara: Will the hon. Gentleman sit down? He will get his chance in a minute.

A major reason why we will not have nuclear depth charges is that they are no good as weapons. An American admiral said:

"the most concrete objection is that any initiative use of nuclear weapons at sea would be very much to the disadvantage of the Allies, because we are the outfit with the big ships and we are the outfit largely dependent on service ships to keep the seas open. The differential advantage we might get from going after a submarine with a nuclear depth bomb is just not worth it. In addition it has the interesting characteristic that if you blow one beneath the surface of the sea, you will ring the ocean acoustically for several hours and lose the capability to track anybody. As a tactic that is soft-headed, deeply obnoxious—and militarily futile."

Moreover, if Boris comes along in the first of a group of submarines and is blown to pieces, behind him will come Igor, Ivan and the rest of them in their submarines, and pass through the disturbed acoustic and sonar screen to reach their objective. Nuclear depth charges are self-defeating. I would not expect the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) to accept this because it was the reason why he resigned from the Government, but the defence Estimates of 1981 at figure 8 on anti-submarine warfare show that there is no need for nuclear depth charges. It shows the submarines being attacked by hunter-killer submarines, of which we shall have fewer because we are to have Trident—that is a further reason for not having Trident. Those estimates show nuclear depth charges being used by destroyers and helicopters, and how effective our anti-submarine warfare capability is.

There is an interesting question on anti-submarine warfare, from which the House has shied away for some time. The Minister should tell us how damaging the unearthing of the Walker spy ring in the United States has been to Britain's naval defence. Much of what comes from the United States seems to indicate the undercutting of our whole basic defences and the control of the Iceland-Greenland-England area, which was popularly known as the Denmark strait. The role of the hunter-killer submarine and the weapons that we already have make the idea of nuclear depth charges obnoxious and foolish in military terms. Our view about whether we should have them is clear in our amendment.

Mr. Conway: Regarding the Labour party's amendment, the Labour party pay lip service to our conventional forces, but if it were successful in removing any form of nuclear deterrent, what precise protection could be afforded to British troops in the event of chemical or biological warfare? We would have no deterrent.

Mr. McNamara: First, if the hon. Gentleman listened to what his right hon. Friend said about the capability and effectiveness of our chemical defences, he would see that that matter does not arise in the Mickey Mouse suits that the troops have. Secondly, it is not the Government's policy to introduce chemical warfare, and we support them in that. The hon. Gentleman also raised the general question whether new technological and other devices can be as effective to the defence of our troops as risking the possibility of a nuclear war. We are not prepared to risk that.

The military concept of star wars is extremely dangerous. More importantly, people have not yet taken on board the genuine and considerable threat that it poses to British industry, British research capability and our ability to sustain modern technological advance. Originally President Reagan suggested that there should be a grand partnership, and that we might even share our knowledge with the Russians to show our bona fides. That statement has long since gone out of the window.

American action in relation to industry has been in direct contradiction to the fine words of the President because industrial developments have taken a different tack. In recent years in COCOM America has urged that the lists of goods and products which may not be exported to the Eastern bloc should be considerably expanded. Indeed, the Americans have even suggested that there should be a body of military advisers in Paris deciding, or at any rate recommending, what should be done.

The United States Government claim direct control over re-exports in the form of re-export licences, with direct sanctions against foreign offenders. Hon. Members will recall the row that broke out over that, in particular with the pipeline system. We also had enormous problems over the NATO frigate because of the views of the United States. Instead of limiting lists in this connection, the American Government are seeking to expand them, not only in terms of weapons and weapon technology but about everything that might have a dual use, be it new materials, robotics, biotechnology, aviation or space travel. All such matters are coming under United States restrictions.

The same can be said of the way in which the Americans treat the free flow of information in the academic sphere. There is now increasing evidence that the United States is screening participants going to American symposia. The United States armed forces are beginning to limit the amount of public tendering for some of their contracts.

The same can be said of classified material. Perhaps the trend of which I have spoken applied to the Trident contract in the United Kingdom; mainly an American subsidiary got the bulk of the small amount of work on the project that came to this country. The Americans are using those methods to prevent a transfer of technology, and they are using their Federal Acquisition Regulations to that end.

President Reagan has signed a Distribution Licence Order which limits what can be done. Clauses in American university research contracts limit the amount of information that can be passed on. This increasing militarisation of science and research means that if we were to flirt with the Americans and enter the star wars business, we should find our basic research encompassed by American contracts, directions and regulations in such a way that any possible spin-off that might be of benefit in the development of the weapons—that is, if we were to join them in that, and I am not in favour of doing that—would be tied up.

The history of this issue shows that while the two-way street of exchange may be improving in some ways—for example, in relation to purchases of weapons—the transfer of technologicial information from the United States to the United Kingdom is very limited indeed.

When President Reagan said that he wanted to get rid of mutually assured destruction and wanted a policy based on mutual security and understanding, everybody applauded him. Monsignor Bruce Kent and E. P. Thompson did not lead any demonstrations down the streets of Whitehall against that suggestion. Unfortunately, as we look at the development of that concept in the last two years, we see how right people were to be suspicious about what the President said.

[Mr. McNamara]

It is clear that the US President is doing a number of things. First, unilaterally he is upsetting the stability of the Western Alliance as it now exists. Secondly, he is disturbing the whole nuclear basis of the defence of Western Europe in terms of the graduated response. Thirdly, he is putting at risk the ABM treaty. Fourthly, he is bringing into focus the fact that if we were to become associated with his latest ideas, we should be seen to be endorsing the creation of instability and insecurity in the world. Those are some of the problems with which hon. Members must wrestle in debating these issues.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does the hon. Gentleman have no sense of balance? Is it somehow all right for the Soviet Union to build up a massive arsenal of offensive nuclear systems, of both strategic and intermediate range, but it is not all right for the President of the US to launch a technical research initiative to see if it is feasible to construct a space base for ballistic missile defence? How is that in any way destabilising? Surely it is offensive systems which destabilise.

Mr. McNamara: I have not gone into the argument in great detail because many other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. Since the decision was first made, the US Administration have said that there will be not the abandonment of ABMs but an integration of the star wars concept with existing missile systems. They are saying, therefore, "We shall knock out the Russian ABMs but maintain our own," and that creates instability as well as an arms race, and it is bound to increase if the Americans go ahead with their plans.

I appreciate, I assure the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), that the Russians are involved in these things. The Americans are involved, as I have explained, and even we have technology which could be adapted to those concepts. Nevertheless, specifically and directly to take up the major defence resources of the West by adopting the American type of scheme would create a more horrendous arms race than we have had up till now.

Indeed, the Secretary of State agrees with that to a degree because he said in evidence to the Select Committee:

> "I think that the arms race has a momentum, and I think that the development into space is a logical step of the evolution of the technologies of war. I do not think there is a new issue which has been raised, other than the scale and resources which would be involved."

We passionately disagree with the right hon. Gentleman about that. In our view, a great qualitative jump in the arms race would take place. It is a frightening prospect for mankind and we should not go ahead with it.

For those reasons, we are not prepared to support the Government Estimates. In our view, they are bad for the defence of the country, will increase instability in the world, will ruin British industry and will prevent the nation establishing a proper, sensible, cohesive and coherent role within the NATO Alliance.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I remind the House that the ten minutes rule is now in operation.

6.8 pm

Sir Frederic Bennett (Torbay): Irrespective of the ten minutes rule, it is up to hon. Members to be brief, so enabling others to speak, some of whom will have been precluded from speaking by the great length of the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who did not observe any restraint. Accordingly, I shall limit my remarks, as I say, irrespective of the rule that now applies.

In the first part of his speech the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North spoke almost entirely of forecasting. He spoke in a gloomy way of the problems that would face a future Conservative Government in the 1990s. Part way through he showed a little of his old spark by admitting that his previous remarks had been largely wasted because, in his view, there would not be another Conservative Government, anyway, so that whether sufficient funds existed in the 1990s would not be a matter to worry either us or him.

I was glad to hear the hon. Gentleman mention two issues later in his speech and, because of the time factor, I shall limit my remarks to those. Although the anti-Trident campaign continues, I hope that it will not be repeated year after year in the way that it has gone on in the past. A few years ago it was recommended by a Select Committee that, if we were to have a sovereign nuclear deterrent, we should adopt Trident.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): When was that agreed?

Sir Frederic Bennett: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was not here at the time. I assure him that that course was adopted, and that policy has been implemented ever since. With a weapon such as Trident, it is not possible to adopt an on-off policy. The Trident issue has been decided and, so long as the Conservatives are in office it will be maintained. That being so, let us not, year after year, battle about whether we should have gone for a different concept. I was a member of the Select Committee which thought that, of all the options before us, Trident was undoubtedly the best.

Some defence strategists genuinely believe that there is either a less expensive way to maintain our sovereign nuclear deterrent or that we can leave the interests of our country to be protected by the United States nuclear umbrella and spend more on our conventional forces. I regard that as an outdated argument which would not get general support in the House.

I understand that the Labour party will fight the next general election campaign on a policy of no nuclear sovereign deterrent and, as I understand it—I stand to be corrected—getting rid of all American nuclear bases and facilities. If that is the Labour party's policy, is it sure that it knows what the impact will be on the coherence of NATO? Other free democratic countries — Italy, Germany, Belgium and France—have decided that they will maintain their own, or support American nuclear deterrents on their soil. Are we to be the only significant NATO power that does not do so?

Is the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North prepared to make a specific pledge that if the Labour party cancels Trident it will devote all the money that it saves to other military purposes? Is he prepared to say what he hinted at in the earlier part of his speech, that the money would be used to increase the scope of conventional

forces? The hon. Gentleman knows that he could not give such a pledge. We all know that the Labour party will fight the next general election campaign not just on nuclear abandonment, but on transferring resources from armaments to other sectors. Let us be in no doubt that the Labour party is being both hypothetical and hypocritical when it suggests that it is interested in saving money for conventional defence by giving up Trident. It may have other reasons for doing so, but that is not one of them, because every penny that it would save would go on other sectors, and other manifesto promises.

I have not yet heard a declaration from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North as to whether the Labour party supports the next stage in the CND's programme, which many Labour Members support. The CND has gone on record as saying that giving up our nuclear weapons and reliance on American nuclear weapons leads logically to giving up our membership of NATO. It says also that in the meanwhile, to set an example, we should not try to persuade the Russians unilaterally, or even reciprocally, to give up any of their nuclear arms. We should know whether the Labour party supports that proposal as well.

I plead with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and the Leader of the House for a full day's debate on SDI. The other place has had two such debates, and in the Western European Assembly, to which I belong, we have had at least two and will have some more in the autumn. There are constant debates in the United States, and the House should be given the opportunity for the true picture to be properly painted. This cannot be done properly by a Minister in a few minutes or even half an hour.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North gave a false impression of what SDI is about. Any citizen would be delighted with a Government who said that instead of a continued arms race they would provide a system which ensured that those now living under the threat of nuclear war would, for the foreseeable future, have that threat removed once and for all. Any Minister who put forward such a programme and was believed would get support across the board, because that is what we have all been looking for.

The argument that negotiations are the only way to achieve peace and that SDI stands in the way of such negotiations is wrong. On the contrary, it has already been shown that it is the only bargaining factor that interests the Russians. I have too much respect for the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North to believe that he really thinks that half—or even a whole—British submarine will affect the outcome of the negotiations. The Russians want to get the Americans to give up research into the system which they have already put into effect around Moscow, and which they are intending to put into effect elsewhere.

Nowhere in history has there been any case of a country voluntarily giving up a weapon as a result of round-the-table negotiations. Weapons have been given up over the centuries when they have become obsolescent. Bows and arrows were given up because of suits of armour, not because of field of the cloth of gold negotiations. Rifles and machine guns were made obsolescent by the invention of the tank. Capital ships became obsolescent and disappeared from the seas because of the creation of aircraft, not because of talks around any negotiating table. We should learn that lesson, and we should be immensely grateful for the fact that the Americans have concentrated on a genuine system of protective defence and have not yielded to the temptation of engaging in yet a further bout of what has rightly been called MAD—mutually assured destruction. That should commend itself to all of us, even the egregious Mr. Kent.

6.16 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): One of the many strange and incomprehensible features of this White Paper is that it fails to address the key questions of communications, operational control, political control and intelligence. In short, it ignores the whole question of military and political crisis management.

Last Monday night, a well-researched "World in Action" programme raised vital questions, not only about these issues, but about the behaviour and actions of political and military leaders under pressure. One of the reasons for nagging on about the Falklands war is to get at the truth. Another reason is to ensure that, given the truth, we can learn from errors the problems and flaws inherent in our systems of political and military control.

If the information provided by "World in Action" is correct, and Sir Sandy Woodward, through Northwood, actually did issue the initial order to sink the Argentine cruiser, without political authority, this is tantamount to the military initiating a fighting war, without political assent. If "World in Action" is incorrect, and Admiral Woodward never issued such an initial order, and Admiral Herbert never countermanded it, then the House should be told.

It is not sufficient to say that these are past minutiae. Important questions about control must be answered. Could such a situation conceivably recur? What steps have been taken to prevent such a recurrence? The 10 million "World in Action" viewers must also have an interest in knowing whether "World in Action" was correct, and, if not, in what specific ways the programme was misleading or incorrect. It appeared to me that Mr. Stuart Prebble and his colleagues had produced a remarkably well-informed programme.

Argument about the alleged leak to the "World in Action" of the draft reports of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs must not be allowed to overshadow what purports to be a startling disclosure. It appears that the crucial joint chiefs of staff meeting on 2 May was not even informed that the Belgrano had been under observation for at least 15 hours by the Conqueror, having been picked up on passive sonar before 1600 hours on Friday 30 April.

The explanation is simple. The 44-year-old cruiser was not considered enough of a threat to be worth worrying about. I must tell my parliamentary colleagues that I have learnt that there was strong opposition not only from the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) but from senior naval staff at Northwood over a period of days to attacking either the carrier or the Belgrano. This was for an understandable reason. They knew that the most dangerous retaliation would come, not from the 6 in guns, range 13 miles, of the old USS Phoenix, or even from carrier-based aircraft, but from land-based aircraft.

A judicial inquiry ought also to set out all the known facts about the supposedly missing log books of the Conqueror. I do not believe that any log books went missing. It is inconceivable that when HMS Conqueror arrived at Faslane someone, or members of the crew, just

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

filched a log book as a memento for his sideboard. It is an insult to the Royal Navy to suppose that it operates like that. I veer to the opinion that the missing log book was a cock-and-bull story devised by Ministers or their aides as a smokescreen for the morning that the Secretary of State for Defence was to give evidence to the Select Committee.

Mr. Wilkinson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The purpose of this debate is to discuss the motion, that the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985" be approved. The defence Estimates contain references to future provision for the defence of the Falkland Islands but no reference to the 1982 operation that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is describing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are discussing the motion and the amendment. As the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) knows, defence debates range very wide. All defence matters are related.

Mr. Dalyell: A judicial inquiry ought also to ascertain what unofficial as well as official messages had been received from Lima and Washington about the Peruvian peace plan. I remind the House of the following exchange on 28 March 1985. The Prime Minister's reply was:

"The authoritative report was the telegram from Her Majesty's ambassador in Lima."—[*Official Report*, 28 March 1985; Vol. 76, c. *293*.]

What unofficial contacts took place? A judicial inquiry should consider whether Chequers received all the intercepted Argentine signals, particularly those of major significance, and, if not, why not? Was Chequers supplied with all decoded signals? These are questions concerning crisis management. We had better learn. I quote the following passage from the "World in Action" programme:

"Four hours later another Argentine signal was sent. This time, it was unmistakable. It confirmed the previous order to the attack groups to return to home waters. If this signal was intercepted, Britain could scarcely justify sinking Argentine ships as self-defence . . . There have been many unofficial reports from GCHQ that the second recall signal was decoded and passed on. As yet, no proof has been produced that it was."

But of course this signal, sent at 1.19 am, was, like all other signals, decoded and passed on, as *The Observer* of 6 January 1985 put it, unchallenged:

"The intercepted Argentine signals were decoded and telexed at the time directly to GCHQ at Northwood and to Mrs. Thatcher's office."

A report by Sir Brian Tovey admits that the cryptanalysts at GCHQ did, indeed, decipher this vital message. Neither their skill nor their computers failed them. In effect, the Tovey report states that there was complete evidence available to the Government, before the order to sink, that the Belgrano and the rest of the fleet were safely on a course for home. Tovey's statement went to Sir Robert Armstrong. I am not even sure that the Secretary of State for Defence has seen it. Ponting certainly has not, and since he compiled the "crown jewels", how can the Secretary of State for Defence be certain, to use his own words, unflattering to his Prime Minister, that there was no "Watergate round here"?

Ministers might care to study Mr. Duncan Campbell's significant article in the *New Statesman* of 3 May 1985. I do not know his sources, but I suspect that they are different from mine.

We now need a clear account from the Prime Minister of how the signal at 1.19 am was handled, who had it, who decrypted it and to whom it was sent.

I believe that knowledge of what happened to this particular signal may well have been suppressed from the present Secretary of State. Maybe it was considered better that he should not know. During the time that the Tovey report was being compiled, was I under surveillance? I am just curious.

Last Sunday the Prime Minister responded to Mr. Frost. She said:

"There were no particular peace proposals. It is alleged that there were some from Peru at that time. There were not. They had not reached us."

This is at variance with the statement of the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) and the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East on the subject.

Why was the decision to sink the Belgrano taken not by the War Cabinet but by an impromptu group of persons called together by the Prime Minister without any minutes being taken? That is a matter for control. The 44-year-old cruiser posed no kind of immediate threat at the time. What a way to run a war.

How is it that a Prime Minister can authorise a shooting war, according to Lord Lewin, without apparently being given, or asking for, an assessment of the potential retribution? The implications for the control of nuclear weapons are spine chilling. This is the Prime Minister who claims to have a veto on cruise missiles. How, if the admirals do not tell the Prime Minister what is going on, can she claim to have "full political control"? One cannot allow admirals to give orders in an undeclared war, before a British life has been lost in action, to start shooting, without the politicians knowing.

The Prime Minister claims that the Belgrano was a threat, but the Conqueror had orders to sink it when it approached the exclusion zone. Why were these orders changed to sink it when it was heading away?

Last Sunday the Prime Minister said:

"You run a war through your admirals . . . Do you really think they say to a Prime Minister, do you really think that in the middle of a war they come up and say: 'That ship has changed direction'?"

Incidentally, it was an undeclared war. This is the Prime Minister with her finger on the nuclear button. Does she know nothing of NATO's strategy of flexible nuclear response, a strategy based upon political leaders being fully and frequently informed on the progress of a conflict? Or will the Prime Minister leave it all to the admirals? On the one hand, is she prepared to run a war though the admirals, while on the other she claims to have full political control? It is like trying to be an Iron Chancellor and an Iron Lady committed to £18·9 billion of defence Estimates at the same time.

Finally, there is one other matter that the House, for all our traditional cosiness, ought to face up to. On our television screens last Sunday morning we saw the British Prime Minister saying to Mr. David Frost:

"If you think I know in detail the passage of every blessed ship, you cannot think what you think the Prime Minister's job is . . . in charge of a war again, I would take the same decision again."

If I were David Frost, I should have said: "But Prime Minister, this was not every blessed ship. This was one ship—the ship, and a thousand men or more—that you had ordered destroyed, a very special ship. Is it bonkers to ask if you made no attempt to find a rational cause to reverse your orders? Is it bonkers to be amazed that you

did not instruct your military to keep you fully and frequently advised? Is it stark staring bonkers to wonder whether, for humanitarian reasons, you hoped that it might go away and give you the opportunity not to start the killing?"

I make no apology for saying that the whole question of the political control of a war is a matter of overriding importance.

6.26 pm

Miss Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): I shall make only one comment about the speech of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). I am sick to death of his obsession with the Belgrano. I am more concerned about the British lives that were lost in the Falklands. The Belgrano was a risk and we were justified in sinking it. That is the end of it. The points that I wish to raise in this debate are more relevant to the discussion than the speech of the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

The Statement on the Defence Estimates deals, under the heading "Rationalisation of support", with an issue that is very close to home: the future organisation of the royal dockyards. Paragraph 518 says:

"We have been considering the arrangements under which the Royal Dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth should be managed in the future to enable them to meet the Royal Navy's needs in the most cost-effective manner. No decisions involving major change will be taken until a period of consultation has been completed."

It is on that point that I would take issue with my hon. Friends.

I do not believe that the consultation period is sufficiently long to be really meaningful. The Government are asking for the results of consultations to be in by July, a very short time. It has been argued that, owing to the leak of a report by Mr. Levene, people have had longer to consider the issues, but I consider that this is a specious argument. It is not one that I accept. The consultation period should start when the Government place the proposals before the public. I shall accept nothing less. I beg my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and his colleagues to allow a further period to elapse during which proper consultations can take place. The issues are very important. We cannot afford to make mistakes about the future organisation of the dockyards. Therefore, it is very important that full consultation should take place.

The city council has set up a steering group, as a result of which a report has been commissioned from Peat Marwick and Mitchell. An interim report was produced which has been sent to me in the last few days. While that report appears to accept much of the analysis of the Government in their open document, it queries whether an agency agreement is the right solution. By that, of course, it means the bringing in of a private firm to manage the dockyard for a period of years. Clearly, if it were to be for a period of only five, six or seven years, and another firm were then to be brought in, that would be unacceptably destabilising. May I have confirmation from the Minister of what I believe the Government intend—that the firm, if satisfactory, could expect to continue for a considerable number of years, and that the period of five or six years would simply be a let-out clause if the particular firm proved, unfortunately, not to live up to the expectations of it?

I feel that we should get rid of the dead hand of the Civil Service in running what is essentially an industrial organisation, although I remain open as to what other form it might take at present. We shall never get away from all the rules and regulations unless we detach ourselves from the Civil Service set. Therefore, I hope that the Government will look very seriously at that point.

I am, of course, concerned about the issue of redundancies in the meantime, prior to reorganisation, since there will be about 2,000 job losses at Devonport, and no local Member of Parliament can view that with equanimity, bearing in mind the level of unemployment. The trouble is that nobody knows for certain whether his or indeed her job is going, and that makes for a loss of morale and real anxiety. If only my hon. Friends could be persuaded to say that there would be no compulsory redundancies, that would take much of the sting out of the matter, and I ask that that be considered. I know that the majority of the redundancies will come through voluntary means, early retirement and the like, but no individual in the dockyard knows how it will affect him or her. It would be a valuable contribution to increasing morale in the dockyards if my hon. Friends could make the commitment for which I have asked.

We are concerned about alternative job opportunities, and I am glad that there has been set up a development agency for Devonport, located in the civic centre. It would be interesting to have some idea of how that agency is working. If my hon. Friends are not able to reply to me tonight, perhaps they will do so in the near future.

It is also important to spell out what possibilities there are for non-naval work in any new set-up. It has always been a minus factor for those working in the dockyards that the work provided by the Navy inevitably goes up and down, and that when there is less work there are redundancies. Good non-naval work which could keep them going in the leaner times would do a great deal to assist, and would make the life of a dockyard city much more acceptable than it is now.

I make a particular plea on behalf of those men who moved with their families from Chatham when that dockyard was closed—in itself a traumatic experience for them—and who now face further difficulties and uncertainties about their future. They have a particular claim on our sympathy and our understanding, and I hope that the Ministers will bear that in mind.

I have a further concern, and that relates to the training of apprentices in the dockyard. It was mentioned in the open document, but there was no full explanation of what was to happen there. It is my understanding from some of the instructors at the apprentice training centre in Devonport that they are still totally unclear about what their future may be. That is not good enough. Apprentice training is in any case vital if the dockyard is to be run efficiently in the future. Those who instruct at the centre need to know what their opportunities are to be in the future. Some information about that would be very helpful.

All in all, I have severe reservations about the way things are going, although I accept the need for change. I hope that every opportunity will be taken to ensure that the dockyard remains as a more efficient, viable unit, and one which plays a very important part in the economy of the city of Plymouth and will, I hope, do so for many years.

I do not wish to conclude my speech without a reference to the Royal Marines. No doubt Ministers will heave a sigh if once again I refer to the issue of the amphibious

[Miss Janet Fookes]

capability of the Royal Navy, but I do so because I was not at all happy about the words used in my hon. Friend's speech in opening the debate today—not this year; next year. I was reminded of the game children play with plum stones and other stones—"This year, next year, some time, never". We want to be absolutely certain that the role of the Royal Marines is backed up by such an amphibious capability. It is a jargon phrase. What it means, in effect, is that, where there is not a proper port for ordinary landing, there is the means of landing the Royal Marines through the amphibious ships. Without that capacity, much of their role and future is thrown into jeopardy. That is how important it is. Certainly it is extremely important for the role in Norway.

6.36 pm

Mr. Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the House for the fact that, for domestic reasons, I was unable to be present yesterday, but I have read the report of the debate and hope that hon. Members will allow me to make my contribution on that basis.

The rules say that I have 10 minutes. I do not like the rules. Frankly, I resent them, as I speak for the Liberal party and the Labour spokesman took 41 minutes. But I must abide by them. Against all my inclinations, therefore, I shall not give way, and I shall also gallop.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) dealt yesterday with the Select Committee report, which he rightly described as "a devastating criticism" of Government policy. I shall repeat only one thing that he said, because it must, from the alliance position, be underlined repeatedly. He said:

> "This is the last year in which we can make a decision not to go ahead with Trident without effectively pouring money down the drain. The Government must reassess the Trident decision." —[*Official Report*, 12 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 933.]

The justification for Britain retaining an independent deterrent, if it is a fully integrated member of NATO, with all the logic that that has, has always escaped me. Given the Western Alliance, given our interdependence, in what circumstances is it envisaged that an independent deterrent would be required? Why do we need it rather than West Germany or Italy? Surely we have outlived those mirages of greatness that we long pursued during the twilight of empire. I fear that both the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence are susceptible to such mirages and do not count their cost.

The defence debate is now very much overshadowed by the discussion of the strategic defence initiative. That is also true of the Geneva talks. The Secretary of State for Defence was cautious yesterday in his references to SDI, and his caution was reinforced by his welcome references to EUREKA, concerning which the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs had made an earlier statement. I attended the Assembly of Western European Union last month, when Baroness Young was questioned on EUREKA and found herself unable to say anything, yet in another part of Paris the Foreign Secretary was giving the go-ahead to it. It says little for the seriousness with which the Government treat that Assembly if, in the context of the so-called reactivation of WEU, it cannot be told things before the New York *Herald Tribune*.

I do not think that the Secretary of State for Defence should be cautious about star wars. He should be saying loudly and clearly that we do not want any further escalation. If the proposition is seen in the context of saying to the Soviet Union that that is what will happen if there is no agreement in Geneva, that is a different matter. But to pretend that this is some great step towards eternally safeguarded peace is yet another mirage.

President Reagan has said that when it is completed it will be deployed only after negotiation with the USSR. I doubt whether that gives Mr. Gorbachev nights filled with Elysian dreams of waving fields of corn in collective farms. I spoke the other day to an American defence expert who said, "I am not married yet, but this will not really be ready until my sons are at college". If we reach that stage, the United States of America can attack the USSR without fear of retaliation. That may sound absurd, but that is what they will say. Mr. Gorbachev will have his own programme and more millions will be poured into systems to defeat undefeatable systems. Man — and, indeed, woman—is endlessly ingenious.

I do not see where that leads us, other than to yet more escalation. The concentration must now surely be on Geneva, which, in a parched, underprivileged and population-burgeoning world, must surely be the last hope for some kind of sane deal between the two systems that now dominate the world. I say "now", because last week I had the opportunity of talking to the Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, who asked me about SDI. China has a nuclear capacity; it has an enormous and diligent population; it feeds its people. It has shown a wise, long view and restraint over Hong Kong. If we in the West cannot sort things out, we will end up being told what to do.

In our country — flawed democracy as it is — we should be able to reach some sort of sensible consensus about our views on how our society should be best defended against any threats. But we are becoming more and more cleaved, and for that I believe the Government have great responsibility. I am not a unilateralist—far from it—but I do not treat those in my party who are unilateralists with contempt or simplistically label them as fellow travellers. Under a Communist system, most of them would be in the labour camps. They are concerned, worried and frightened people watching impotently as their rulers not just fail to find accords, which would give them and all of us security, but are very much seen as not making the necessary efforts to do so.

One may say that the Greenham Common women are nuts, and go down in a flak-jacket and laugh at them. I do not agree with them and I have found it difficult to have any dialogue with them. But they represent a powerful plea for real action on disarmament. I understand and agree with the argument about one-sided defence often put forward by Conservative Members, but I also recognise the view that if the rockets go up there can be no one-sided survival.

No Liberal can defend a Communist system. No Liberal can be other than appalled at the treatment of the Sakharovs and the Shcharanskys and numberless, nameless others. But no Liberal who has made the effort, as I and my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party have, to talk regularly to the Soviets and to visit the Soviet Union can take the facile "Empire-of-evil" view, nor accept that managed agreement is impossible and that all that is left to us is to build the munitions dumps higher and higher.

I have little time left, and I wish to put on the record the amendment tabled by the alliance which was not selected:

"Line 1, leave out from 'House' to end and add 'fully supports the United Kingdom's continued membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; regrets the forthcoming reduction in Britain's conventional defence which will lower the nuclear threshold and create an unacceptable reliance on "first use" of nuclear weapons; calls for the cancellation of Trident in order to avoid a new and provocative proliferation of the arms race and to release resources needed to strengthen Britain's conventional defence; considers that the high level of Soviet and United States nuclear arsenals threatens world peace and could be reduced without jeopardising mutual deterrence; regrets the preoccupation with the Strategic Defence Initiative which is technically questionable and obstructs progress towards peace and disarmament; and urges the Government to use all its influence, in conjunction with our European partners, to persuade the United States to take a constructive position in the Geneva discussions with the Soviet Union in which British nuclear forces could be included.'."

I believe that that makes a good case. We argue that it is possible to find the will effectively both to defend our country as necessary and the will to find a managed solution to the endless escalation of arms development and expenditure in the West and the East.

6.45 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I wish to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on his White Paper—both its style and its content. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister of State on his opening speech — a mastery of constructive ambiguity that would have gladdened his father's heart.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who opened for the Opposition today, repudiated the general strategic concept of the White Paper. I find that a tragedy. I have been in the House for some years. When I first came here Mr. Attlee had just launched the British independent deterrent. Then Hugh Gaitskell was going to fight again and again to prevent unilateralism. Nye Bevan was not going to be a streaker in the conference room. Harold Wilson was persuaded by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) to keep Polaris, in spite of his election pledge the other way; and the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), the Father of the House, adopted the Chevaline improvement in Polaris. Now, suddenly, we are faced with the official Opposition departing from the basis of a bipartisan Alliance policy. I find that a tragedy.

I find it difficult to explain, especially as anti-Americanism has grown among Opposition Members. After all, the further we are from the Americans the more important it is that we should have the means of defending ourselves. To abandon all nuclear weapons—our own and those in the United States—and suggest that we should confront a nuclear superpower with only conventional forces is to return to a position where we would be dervishes with bows and arrows fighting against machine guns.

The escapism of the Opposition was well illustrated in two interesting speeches — one by the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) and the other by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). The right hon. Member for Deptford suggested that peace should be kept by United Nations blue helmet troops. The hon. Member for Walton said that we must make a gesture; we must begin to disarm nuclear weapons unilaterally. That is the sort of speech that would be all right in a university union debate. It might just wash in a maiden speech. But both the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Gentleman lost their political virginity a long time ago. Listening to them reminded me of two old madames preaching the virtues of no sex before marriage.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said that he was in favour of a British nuclear deterrent but against the Trident. Political reasons might incline him to be so. He said that there must be alternatives. He knows perfectly well that the most parsimonious Government that Britain has ever had is this Government. They would have taken any alternative if it had been worth taking. The Government analysed the figures and knew that there was no alternative. What would be a criminial waste of money would be to invest in a second-rate deterrent that did not have the credibility to deter.

I have reservations, too, about the right hon. Member's idea of withdrawing battlefield weapons 150 miles. If one looks at a map of Germany, one finds that withdrawing 150 miles would place the weapons along the Rhine. If I were a German I would not feel sympathetic towards that manoeuvre.

The critics of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have agreed on one point. The Select Committee on Defence and the right hon. Members for Llanelli and for Devonport have said that they do not believe that my right hon. Friend's defence programme can be financed within the existing Estimates. They may be right; I do not know. However, I have confidence in my right hon. Friend. He will do his best, and his best can be pretty good. In any case, he should not have any sleepless nights about it.

The Estimates for the Home Department are decided in Cabinet. That is not the case with the defence Estimates. They are decided in Moscow and, to a lesser extent, in Washington. It is the threat that determines the programme, and the threat is growing. Let us have no illusions about that.

No doubt, the stately minuet at Geneva over arms control is continuing with due dignity, but the issue will be decided on the periphery.

The arms race has run for a long time. The issue will be settled in Afghanistan, Angola, the Horn of Africa, Cambodia and Central America. For a long time, the Soviets have openly declared their support for what they call "freedom fighters" and have supported them by proxy. At long last, the United States has decided to fight back. The United States could no longer look the other way. When the United States Congress votes publicly to support resistance in Afghanistan and Nicaragua, something is happening. The omens are clear. I hope that we will support the United States because we know more about this type of warfare than almost any other country. We must draw this conclusion: if the Estimates to which we are working are not sufficient, they will have to be stretched and the necessary financial resources will have to be found.

6.52 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I do not propose to follow the remarks of the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), but I may refer to some of his points tangentially.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) on her speech on the dockyards. I shall not

[Mr. Dick Douglas]

say much about the dockyard at Rosyth, which affects my constituency, because the Select Committee on Defence will consider the Government's proposals and take a considerable amount of evidence. I would not want to prejudge its report. I shall adopt the same view that the Government seem to adopt—all the options are open. The Government's preferred option still needs critical examination.

Referring to putting the contracts to refit the Otter and Euryalus to tender, paragraph 511 of the statement says that the comparison

"will enable us to compare the performance of commercial yards on this type of work"

with that of the dockyards. I hope that the Government will give a detailed assessment of the comparisons. I echo the words of the hon. Member for Drake: the period of consultation has been too short. Unless the Government can produce before 5 July the necessary figures for the Select Committee clearly showing the basis of comparison, their case will be in considerable doubt. We are entitled to a detailed consideration of cost.

I share the concern of the House at the demise of the Merchant Navy and urge all hon. Members not to be complacent about its numbers. They are "unduly" inflated because of North sea activity. I hope that that activity will continue for a considerable period, but it might not. I believe that the type of vessels that now operate will not necessarily fit our future defence requirements. I shall say nothing about Trident because the Select Committee will report on that aspect.

The right hon. Member for Pavilion referred to the threat that we face. This aspect is given considerable emphasis in annex A of the statement. It is, however, a guarded analysis. I part company with the right hon. Gentleman in certain respects. The statement gives us the impression that the Warsaw pact is monolithic. It is not. One cannot have a situation in which Poland or Rumania does not want to renew the agreement for five years or one in which Albania wishes to withdraw from the pact and still argue that the pact is monolithic.

Recently David Holloway said:

"The non-Soviet members nominally contribute 55 divisions to the Pact's order of battle, compared with the 31 Soviet divisions in Eastern Europe."

How much do the non-Soviet forces really add to Soviet military power? Would the Poles fight? They are the best-armed and the best-equipped members of the pact. How would the East Germans or Rumanians perform? I am not complacent about this matter. I have paid many visits to the area with other Select Committee members. I am not a defence expert and I do not have a military background. I make no apologies for my Merchant Navy background. I thought, because of my background, that it would be useful to become a member of the Select Committee to analyse the difficulties and complexities of this subject. It is difficult to become an expert on it. I feel for Ministers who must make the decisions. I have tried in all humility to gain some knowledge of this subject. The Soviet Union has not been looking since 1917 for buffer states to defend themselves. This has been happening for about 250 years.

I turn to the strategic defence initiative. We have heard a great deal about President Reagan's speech in March 1983 but little about the sums involved. This is part of the dilemma. As I understand it, we are talking of sums not far short of $30 billion to be spent before 1989. That is more than twice Britain's total annual defence expenditure. We must recognise the pull that that expenditure will exert in the military industrial context. The Nitze criteria—that we will not embark upon this programme unless it is "reliable, survivable and cost effective"—are impossible to fulfil.

We have had a meeting with Dr. Keyworth, the President's scientific adviser. According to the United States Information Service, he said:

"I'll reiterate a prediction. Before the president leaves office, we're going to be able to demonstrate technology that convinces the Soviets that we can—if we choose—develop a weapon to shoot down their entire ICBM fleet as it tries to enter space."

I understand that the President has about another three years in office. Therefore, if we are to accept Keyworth's view, such a prospect is not as distant as we might imagine. Keyworth is highly intelligent and is nobody's fool, but he frightens me to death. That is the view which we must answer in the context of our research and development prospects.

Yesterday I crossed swords with the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). Today I warn the House that we must be extremely careful about nomenclature. What the Americans mean by research and development may not be what we mean. In any case, the 1972 ABM treaty clearly circumscribes development. Article V of that treaty states:

"Each Party undertakes not to develop, test, or deploy ABM systems or components which are sea-based, air-based, space-based, or mobile land-based."

Therefore, research can be carried out only if the systems are fixed, and that places severe constraints on them.

That is not the type of system which Dr. Keyworth seems to describe. He is describing systems that can take out Soviet ICBMs at the boost stage. These are extremely dangerous and difficult developments, and it would be wrong of us—I support the suggestion of a full-scale debate on this issue — to stand back and say, "Everything is fine. All we will do is participate in research." I again stress that what we mean by research and development may not be what the United States means. In any case, I doubt whether we shall frighten the Russians to death on the basis of carrying out research.

I am concerned not so much about the cheapness of the nuclear deterrent as about the cheapness of chemical warfare. The West is ill-prepared to counteract what the Soviets or the United States are doing. If we are to do anything through the United Nations or the world community, we must reinvigorate national opinion on chemical warfare, because if our only answer to chemical warfare is the nuclear deterrent we are in severe trouble.

Labour members of the Select Committee, with other hon. Members, spent a lot of time preparing this report. I hope and trust that that report and the Government's White Paper will be widely discussed in the nation. In particular, I hope that the Select Committee's report will be read by all my constituents.

Royal Assent

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Industrial Development Act 1985
2. Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985
3. Coal Industry Act 1985
4. Motor-Cycle Crash Helmets (Restriction of Liability) Act 1985
5. Luton Borough Council Act 1985
6. Greater Manchester Act 1985
7. Royal Bank of Scotland Act 1985
8. Bath City Council Act 1985

Defence Estimates 1985

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

7.4 pm

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): I hope that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) will forgive me if I do not comment on his interesting speech.

The debate has been characterised by a total muddle and incoherence by the Labour Front Bench on nuclear policy. It is clear that, in spite of the protestations of Labour Members about this White Paper, they would spend not a penny more—indeed, very much less—on defence. To put it mildly, there was also a difference of opinion between the Liberal and Social Democratic parties.

The debate has been characterised by an optimism on the part of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that increased competition plus the speculative nature of the forward programme will in some way ensure that it will be all right on the night. I do not entirely share his optimism. However optimistic or pessimistic the view of my right hon. Friend or the Select Committee about the amount of money that will be available for the equipment programme, no one has argued that in real terms there will be an increase over the next few years. Indeed, we have heard to the contrary, and all we have discussed so far is by how much it will decrease.

Yesterday, as reported in column 913 of the *Official Report,* my right hon. Friend said that over a 10-year period costings become increasingly speculative. That is undoubtedly true in respect of some projects and some items of equipment and stores. But the House will be aware that a new frigate, submarine, aircraft or armoured fighting vehicle takes about nine to 10 years from the design stage to the in-service stage. Therefore, many hon. Members — both those who served on the Select Committee and those in the House—fear that equipment that will be needed to replace outdated weapons and capabilities by a specific time will not be available because of financial pressures.

The cat was let out of the bag in one of the Select Committee's evidence-taking sessions. In paragraph 675 on page 129 of the report, I asked the Assistant Under-Secretary (Systems), Mr. Reeves:

> "If you pluck a year out of the air—1990—and take the three programmes the Type 23, the EH101 and Trident . . . those three programmes would represent a major part of the Royal Navy's equipment programme".

Mr. Reeves replied:

> "I think you have interesting and contrasting building blocks here. Trident has a certain political commitment; the EH101 has a certain international commitment; the Type 23 and its expenditure pattern has an element of discretion attached to it. Those three instances could be multiplied several times and you would find these building blocks with different degrees of solidity."

I then said:

> "Because of the Italians and the total commitment to Trident, the Type 23 programme looks as if it will go pretty far right."

Mr. Reeves replied:

> "I did not say that."

I then said:

> "No, but we can draw our own conclusions",

as indeed we can. That is what worries the Committee and many hon. Members.

When we talk of flexibility, we talk not about cuts but about pushing items of equipment further right. In a nutshell—and my right hon. Friends know it—the fact

[Mr. Keith Speed]

is that in the next 10 years a great deal of new conventional equipment will be required by all three armed services to keep our forces up to date and able to meet the threat that faces us. In addition, there is to be massive expenditure on Trident. There will also be an equipment budget which will be declining in real terms from an admittedly high plateau. Within the next few years there will be substantial problems for the MOD. I would describe it as a defence review in a stealth configuration. I hope I am wrong, but I believe that I am right.

A number of hon. Members have referred to amphibious warfare. I regret the remarks made by the Secretary of State yesterday about lobbies from the Royal Marines, Royal Navy or wherever trying to embarrass Ministers. On reflection, I think that my right hon. Friend will wish that he had not made that remark. It does him no credit and was totally out of character.

Paragraph 428 of last year's Defence White Paper stated:

"We are currently examining the provision of future amphibious capability once the existing specialised ships come to the end of their lives in the 1990s".

Paragraph 430 of this year's White Paper states:

"We are considering a range of options for providing a future amphibious capability once the existing specialised ships come to the end of their planned life".

We have heard that the same decision has been taken for next year, so presumably the type can stay in place for next year's White Paper. That is not good enough.

The French have a similar capability with their Orage and Ouragan ships, which are the same age as Fearless and Intrepid, but are replacing those ships with the new TCD 90 class and ordering not one or two but three for delivery by 1993. The Royal Marines have a right to be fearful about this. Only three or four years ago their whole existence was in jeopardy. Fearless and Intrepid were to be disposed of prematurely and only the Falklands war and certain other matters prevented that.

The Select Committee stated clearly and unequivocally in paragraphs 25 to 27 that there is an urgent need for an early decision to replace those aging vessels. Those of us who went last week with the Select Committee to NATO's northern flank in Norway had discussions with NATO commanders and Norwegian forces and generals as well as with Norwegian politicians. We were left in no doubt about the overwhelming political and military importance of our amphibious capability. If Ministers are thinking of replacing that capability by airlifts, I must tell them that they are wrong. The importance of amphibious capability lies in its flexibility. Having seen the thousands of islands around 68° and 69° north, we realise that that flexibility is vital. Equally, if Ministers think that they can get by using merchant ships, I remind them that, in view of the lack of damage control in such vessels, even a minor accident can quickly put them out of action, as shown by the accident off the coast of Holland a few days ago. I am arguing not for a one-by-one replacement of Intrepid or Fearless but for urgent and positive decisions, perhaps with a small number of less expensive ships. That decision is needed quickly by the Royal Marines and our northern flank partners and not least by the Dutch with whom we work.

The contribution of the Merchant Navy is vital and the Select Committee has now produced a report on this. Some argue that it will be a short war next time so it does not really matter, but in my view that is nonsense. In a report to Congress a year or so ago Mr. Weinberger warned of the fallacy of assuming a short conventional war and spoke of

"enhancing the readiness, mobility and sustainability of our forces".

Part of that sustainability is the need for 600 merchant ships in the first month of any crisis or conflict to steam across the north Atlantic to these islands and to continental Europe with men, reinforcements and supplies. The harsh fact is that not just this country but other NATO countries are allowing the merchant fleet to run down to a dangerous extent. I remind the House once again of what was said by the man who in the autumn will become the new Chief of Defence Staff. After the Falklands crisis, Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse said:

"I cannot say too often or too clearly how important has been the Merchant Navy's contribution to our efforts. Without the ships taken up from trade the operation could not have been undertaken and I hope this message is clearly understood by the British nation."

Admiral Fieldhouse understands that very well; but do Parliament, the Government and the country understand it?

7.13 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): The hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) is remembered for having resigned from the Government over indefensible defence cuts, and we admire him for that.

I wish to comment briefly on the theme that has run through all ministerial speeches in this two-day debate. Ministers have all been at great pains to persuade us that we are getting value for all the taxpayers' money spent on defence, but I believe that the opposite is true. I cite just one example. The Select Committee report gives the amount to be spent on the Falkland Islands from 1984 to 1994 as £3,220 million, which is money down the drain. Every other party in the House is committed to getting rid of that burden from around the taxpayer's neck. The taxpayers and the British public are being massively conned by some of the suavist and smoothest con men in the business, both within and outside the House. I believe that there is waste on a monumental scale in the most profligate Government Department in Whitehall.

I will cite just a few examples. On 8 April, *The Observer* ran an article referring to a series of articles published in November 1983. In 1983 it wrote of

"institutionalised inefficiency and waste on a large-scale"

and

"lack of accountability within the Ministry of Defence".

It points out that Ministery officials have devised a number of ways of answering questions and ensuring that auditors, the guardians of the public purse, do not see potentially embarrasing documents. Moreover, parliamentary attempts to penetrate the system are easily thwarted. The example was given of a three-inch file of British companies making Exocet missile parts, but as such documents do not officially exist no one in the House can see them and even the Comptroller and Auditor General cannot see them.

On torpedoes, *The Observer* stated in its article of 13 November 1983:

"The Navy's latest torpedo, the Tigerfish, is considered so unreliable that submarine crews are reluctant to fire it. There are grounds for believing that its successor, Spearfish, recently ordered by the Ministry of Defence at a cost of £950 million, will be equally disastrous."

Tigerfish apparently proved its unreliability in the Falklands war. According to *The Observer*, 70 were fired at a cost of £50,000 each but

"The commander of the submarine which sank the Belgrano chose to fire Second World War generation torpedoes in preference to the Tigerfish he carried."

I was a member of the Select Committee on Public Accounts when we called into question the value of another torpedo, the Sting Ray, the only torpedo mentioned in the White Paper and costing about £700 million at constant 1984 prices. In March, the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the torpedo programme estimated the cost of the three torpedoes at £5,000 million up to the mid-1990s, but no other navy within or outside NATO seemed remotely interested in them. The Comptroller and Auditor General summed up as follows:

"Successive torpedo projects have suffered delays and cost increases and optimum weapon effectiveness has not been achieved. This suggested to me that the taxpayer in the past may not have received good value for the considerable sums spent."

That is a typicl understatement of the case from the cautious Comptroller and Auditor General. It is a polite way of saying that the poor British taxpayer has been ripped off by Marconi and others in the defence business. At paragraph 19, the Comptroller and Auditor General says:

"A major difficulty is the lack of competition in the United Kingdom for the prime contractor role."

Marconi, now Marconi Underwater Systems Ltd., has a monopoly in torpedo development and production in the United Kingdom and is sitting very pretty. I remember two years ago, when Sir Frank Cooper, then the permanent secretary at the Ministry, was asked how many defence contractors had gone out of business in the great recession that we had suffered from in the previous few years, he smiled and said, "I cannot think of one."

A later report from the Comptroller and Auditor General on design and procurement of warships, which was published about a week ago, exposes similar problems and abuses. Paragraph 11 of the report says that the five main warship yards have made £185 million profit on the building of warships since 1980-81, as against losses of £525 million on other work in the same period. Paragraph 12 says:

"in terms of the prices paid for warships . . . and the profits made by the warshipbuilders in the past suggest that the MOD have not always received good value for money".

Again, we have the polite, moderate and cautious words of the Comptroller and Auditor General which show, once again, that taxpayers are being robbed of vast amounts of money by the armaments industry.

Vickers Shipbuilding Engineering Ltd. is the monopoly supplier of nuclear submarines to the Royal Navy and depends entirely on Ministry of Defence orders. It is one of the seven British Shipbuilders yards which are to be handed over to private owners. The Comptroller and Auditor General's report says that such companies have consistently overestimated the number of man hours necessary to complete contracts. The overestimates averaged 21 per cent., the worst example being 43 per cent. Non-competitive contracts for nuclear submarines are expected to be worth more than £2 billion up to 1990. Hundreds of millions of pounds of British taxpayers' money is being swallowed up every year by defence contractors whose accounts are never properly checked in Whitehall or elsewhere.

We are now embarking on the Trident programme. I shall say nothing about its morality, but the only people who are laughing are the companies in the United States and Britain which will build the components. My God, the figures are worth quoting. *The Sunday Times* of a few weeks ago described the enormous duplicity, immorality, dishonesty and fraud which is being perpetrated in the United States and which is now being perpetrated in Britain. That article mentioned $748 being asked for a pair of air force pliers, $436 being asked for a navy hammer and $7,600 being asked for an air force coffee pot——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must conclude his speech—he has had his 10 minutes.

Mr. Hamilton: We do not believe a word that Ministers say when they say that they have defence expenditure under control. On the contrary, they are willing partners in a massive fraud being perpetrated on British taxpayers.

7.24 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton), and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be delighted to have such a close ally in the appointment of Mr. Levene, whose job it is to ensure that good value for money is obtained.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: He is one of them.

Mr. Thorne: If the figures which the hon. Gentleman quoted are anywhere near accurate, they show that there is much work for Mr. Levene to do.

I attended the Select Committee's interview of Mr. Levene earlier this week. What he said shows that he will direct his attention towards that problem and try to ensure that as few as possible cost-plus contracts are entered into, but that there will be many more fixed-price contracts. I welcome that step, as the world is highly competitive and we are in direct competition with other European countries, America and, perhaps in future, Japan.

Further economies could be achieved in the fisheries protection service. I understand that no fewer than 16 vessels provide the service, but that only four of them are required. In 1981 there were proposals to transfer the service to the Merchant Navy, where considerable economies could be achieved. I understand that as recently as last January the Inspector of Fisheries looked into the matter and that four excellent companies are able and willing to provide the service. They are P and O Fleet Mastercare, Townsend Thoresen, Sea Containers and F. T. Everard. I hope that the Ministry and, if necessary, the Cabinet will examine the cost comparisons closely to ensure that there is no waste so that resources can then be moved to other parts of the defence budget.

The two-way street is important. Matters have improved considerably recently. There was once a highway to Britain from America and a narrow country lane from Britain to the United States. The imbalance has been partially rectified, and trade is now merely 2:1 in their favour. There is still some way to go, however, and I hope that the lessons of Trident, which I fully support, have been learnt and that, in future, any such massive programme will be backed up with a direct offset arrangement.

The United States needs our moral support for the continuation of the nuclear umbrella, quite apart from a

[Mr. Thorne]

financial contribution towards the cost. We did not use our negotiating opportunities to the best advantage. Had we obtained offsetting arrangements, we should not have to work so hard to sell Plessey's excellent mobile subscriber equipment system, which my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) mentioned earlier. There is no comparison between that system and the RITA system, which the French Thompson organisation is selling hard. I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces has lent his weight to the Plessey project, because I remember seeing him in Washington when the Defence Select Committee was there earlier this year. I understand that one of the main reasons for his visit was to draw attention to the advantages of the system. The French are devoting their energy to selling a system which is not in the same class as Plessey's tried and tested equipment, being part of the incredible Ptarmigan system.

While so much is being spent on defence, I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends also to consider service families. In the past we have been able to rely very much on the nuclear umbrella. For the past 40 years it has served us extremely well. However, we are now moving into a new era in which several much smaller powers can acquire the knowledge that is necessary for nuclear weapons. Arms have been supplied by some powers to terrorist organisations, and that nuclear knowledge may be used for terrorist purposes in future. Coupled with that fact, if we have the strategic defence initiative, it could lead to 95 per cent. of the nuclear weapons in the world being rendered obsolete, which could mean a new situation for the nuclear umbrella.

If we are asking service personnel to go off and fight for their country, we have an obligation under the defence budget to consider what happens to their families. Therefore, I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his Ministers to work closely with the Home Office in considering what should be done in civil defence. In other countries, as much as 3 per cent. of the total defence budget is allocated to civil defence measures, but in this country we spend less than half of 1 per cent. on that. There is a great difference. If we are to work towards the type of result that the strategic defence initiative may produce, we must be ready for what might happen at the end of the day. It would be a costly exercise to try to make the necessary arrangements in a hurry, whereas if it were done over a period of 10 or more years there could be a series of phased developments, particularly in the sphere of shelters. Therefore, the Ministry of Defence has an interest in the matter. I have already mentioned this matter to the Secretary of State and I hope that it will be taken up and looked at carefully.

There is just one other matter that I should like to mention in the short time available. It seems entirely wrong that so many countries are sheltering under the defence provided by relatively few. I am thinking particularly of the Secretary of State's remarks the other day on the poor contribution by one of our NATO allies, Denmark. Other countries, particularly Japan, were limited back in 1945 by the United States to total defence expenditure not exceeding 1 per cent. of their gross national product. That has given Japan and other countries an enormous advantage, in that they have not been burdened by the heavy defence expenditure that we have had to undertake over the years. They have the advantage of relying upon us to keep the air and sea lanes open for the benefit of their trade, both in supplying their goods round the world and receiving the oil which they desperately require to keep their industry going. That is entirely wrong. I understand why the United States did that in 1945, but we have had plenty of time to put the matter right. Whether that is done directly or indirectly is a matter for discussion among Governments, but undoubtedly a better solution must be sought and a more satisfactory answer obtained.

7.34 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I preface my remarks by expressing my gratitude to those who, in their wisdom, limited speeches to 10 minutes. If that had not been done, non-Privy Councillors would not have had a look in, in such a debate.

Secondly, I should like to comment on the procedural impediments in the House to a proper debate on defence. We are one of the few legislatures that does not consider the Estimates seriously, rarely voting on them and not proceeding line by line. Although many kind things have been said about the Select Committee on Defence, which is under the able chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins), and of which I am a member, we have no real input into the Estimates process, unlike most other legislatures. We probably have the weakest Committee system, certainly the weakest Defence Committee system in the whole of the Alliance with the exception of Iceland, which, as it has no defence, finds having a defence committee surplus to its requirements. Despite our lack of power, we managed to inspire the Secretary of State to a fine series of rhetorical flourishes yesterday, with our reports on merchant shipping and defence commitment and resources.

The Secretary of State lashed out at everyone. Last week it was the Danes. This week it was our Select Committee on Defence for some of the things that we dared to say. That Committee is under no obligation to produce reports that make the Ministry of Defence happy. That is the responsibility of the Ministry's public relations experts and Tory Central Office. It is not our task. We analysed carefully and produced what I believe is a competent piece of research, which will be read diligently in the Ministry of Defence, if that has not already been done.

The Secretary of State struck out at his own Department, defence contractors, the military and the Labour party—indeed, everyone except himself and the Treasury. I am afraid that the Secretary of State is angry because our Committee has finally rumbled him and pointed out that the emperor has far fewer clothes than he has hitherto presented to the world. In his speech yesterday, in criticising the Select Committee on Defence, the right hon. Gentleman looked at our worst case analysis and his best case analysis, and tried to point out the difference between what we say is available for defence and what he says is available. Perhaps our figures were too generous to the right hon. Gentleman's Department. We did not take into account the large pay increase that was given to the services recently. During his interview with us earlier in the week, Mr. Levene talked of a 10 per cent. efficiency saving in defence procurement, which was different from our calculations. Our figures, with which the Secretary of State disagrees, go wider than he is prepared to admit. The simple fact, which anyone can see,

is that there is a considerable discrepancy between the Government's aspirations and what is available for defence. It is what some people would call a funding gap. No amount of massaging of the figures, or use of mirrors or conjuring tricks will eliminate that fact. The Government will simply not have the money available to do what they wish.

The Secretary of State proudly told us what his Department had done in the past five or six years, but one must tell him honestly that, with the exception of a few years, his Government have not met the 3 per cent. real increase target to which the previous Government agreed. His Government are now abandoning it. Therefore, they are in considerable difficulties. I would accept a non-nuclear defence policy — not because I have moral objections to nuclear weapons. I find all nuclear and chemical weapons objectionable. I believe that if there is going to be a funding gap, the only function that can be withdrawn, albeit reluctantly, is the nuclear function, as long as the resources committed to conventional defence will compensate.

That can be strongly justified to NATO. The Government, in committing themselves to NATO and to a significant out-of-area capability—the Falklands and so on—will simply have to have a defence review, and abandon a function, or half a function. It must be unpalatable for Conservatives to admit that fact, but I suggest that in addition to reading the White Paper they look carefully at the report of the Select Committee on Defence.

The Select Committee investigated many problem areas, including the flying white elephant Nimrod and the gross inadequacy of our air defence. The Conservative party criticised Labour's record in air defence, yet a Conservative Minister slaughtered our air defence 30 years ago. The idea of bringing out the museum Lightnings has been laughed off as the Army's equivalent of digging up General Custer. What we need, but will be unable to afford under the Government, are far more Tornados for air defence. The arming of Hawks is not remotely adequate, because they have no radar. They will need Phantom jets to take them out and point them in the direction of an adversary, which will no doubt release its load many miles away. We shall be sending out gallant men unprepared.

The Government are struggling in every way possible to bridge the gap that they know exists between what they want to spend and what they can spend. One example that has come to light is our third aircraft carrier, the Ark Royal. It is lunatic planning to decide to have three aircraft carriers but not to have the men, aeroplanes and helicopters to put on those carriers. Shuffling two crews among three carriers is the height of folly in peacetime, and would be suicidal in time of war.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) criticised COCOM. I sympathise with some of his economic arguments. It is the height of lunacy to export or give away equipment of a non-military character to the Soviet Union that can easily be used for military purposes. Research has shown how costly it is to compensate the West in military terms for the quantum leap forward that the Soviet Union has been able to make in many technologies, based not only on intelligence and spying, but on the legal, and sometimes illicit, exports of what might appear to be non-military equipment.

During the next three years, the Labour party will have the difficult task of convincing the public that its alternative defence policy will provide adequate security for Britain. The policy that we presented at the previous general election did not work, and contributed heavily to our defeat. Unless we are careful, we might do the same in 1986 or 1987.

During visits of the Select Committee to other countries, I have met many Democratic Socialists. To most of them, defence is vital. Only in Britain and a few other countries are democratic Socialists considered as being endorsers of pacificism or semi-neutralism. Last week, we were in Sweden. Being a Democratic Socialist in Sweden and believing in defence is an expensive business. It has 350 fighters—almost as many as we have—and an enormous commitment to civil defence. Almost everyone between the ages of 17 and 47 is committed to participating in the defence of Sweden. In France, Socialism does not mean pacifism. The Socialist-led coalition in Italy is investing heavily in defence. Socialists in Spain and Portugal would not deny their citizens adequate defence. The last thing that one could call Chinese Socialists is pacifist or neutralist or people who are naive about the Soviet Union.

We can convince the public only if we convince ourselves first. Any party whose defence programme includes policies that the public perceive as inadequate will deservedly be rejected by the electorate. I am not sure that we are up to it, but the Labour party's task is to provide a proper alternative defence policy that is not a carping membership of NATO, like the Greek variety, but is a genuine commitment to NATO.

7.44 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State stressed the vital importance of our membership of NATO. He was right to do so, for it is impossible to exaggerate how important it is to NATO to have Britain as a member, and how important it is for us to be a member of NATO. I shall concentrate my remarks on some of the strains that confront the Alliance.

My first concern arises from the decision to proceed with research on the strategic defence initiative. I approve of the decision, and I wish our American allies every success. However, a basic misunderstanding of SDI seems likely to fuel uneasiness about American intentions in researching those sophisticated systems.

Last week, with other right hon. and hon. Members, I was privileged to be briefed on SDI at the Pentagon by the programme's director, General Abrahamson. That briefing set SDI in context as the series of research programmes that it is. The programme is wholly compatible with the anti-ballistic missile treaty, and is comparable to the research permitted under that treaty, which the Soviets have been carrying out for many years. Only the Soviets have deployed an ABM system to protect Moscow.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Sir F. Bennett) said, for 20 years, NATO has relied on the principle of mutually assured destruction. We have relied on a nuclear retaliation capability large enough to counter any potential aggressor. For many years, it has been assumed that neither NATO nor the Warsaw Pact possessed the technology to construct a comprehensive and effective defence against nuclear offensive systems. That assumption must now be set aside. Scientific and technological advances suggest that we must now consider

[Mr. James Couchman]

seriously a defence option, especially a non-nuclear option, which might allow us to move to a much more secure and stable basis for deterrence.

Apart from technical feasibility, the other parameter that has changed has been the scale of Soviet offensive and defensive growth since the SALT process began, in addition to which there has been growing non-compliance and deception by the Soviets that threatens the entire military balance. Not only does the Soviet Union possess the only ABM system; it possesses the world's only deployed anti-satellite capability. The Soviet Union clearly believes in both offensive and defensive deterrence.

In view of the massive build-up of Soviet forces, offensive and defensive, nuclear and non-nuclear, it is clear that NATO must respond by modernising its retaliatory capacity and updating its strategic and longer-range intermediate nuclear forces. Hence the deployment of MX missiles and the development of Midgetman, the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles and, for Britain, the ordering of Trident. In addition, NATO must explore new deterrent options. Hence the desirability of SDI, for it is directly aimed at negating the destabilising effect of Soviet growth in offence and defence. If it concentrates Soviet minds on defence, it will have a highly beneficial stabilising effect.

It is unfortunate that those who scoff at NATO and at our defence should have tagged SDI with the perjorative epiphet of star wars. SDI is a research programme with several different elements, which is carried out at several different locations. I should stress that it is a research programme. Although research will cost about $26 billion during the next few years, deployment of such a system if the research is successful would cost anything between $500 billion and $1,000 billion. The jump between research and deployment is a quantum leap. Research is permissible under the ABM treaty; deployment would require negotiation. But we should be deluding ourselves if we thought that the United States would give the Soviets a simple veto on deployment.

We should encourage our American allies to carry out the research, in the hope that they will achieve the concept of a multi-layered defence system. We should share in that research and, if it is successful, we should share in the decision as to whether SDI should be deployed.

My second anxiety relates to the current American attitude to the ABM treaty and the unratified SALT II treaty. In the case of the ABM treaty, the Americans have every good reason for cynicism. It is clear that the Soviet construction of a huge new phased-array radar near Krasnoyarsk is an ominous departure from and breach of the ABM treaty. That installation will increase the Soviet Union's capability to deploy a territorial ballistic missile defence system. Claims that it is a part of a space tracking station are demonstrably a cynical untruth.

The SALT II treaty, although unratified, has generally been adhered to by the USA for six years. This week, President Reagan has committed himself, on the advice of Secretary of State Shultz, to broad observance of SALT II whilst reserving the right to counter Soviet breaches such as the construction of the SS-X-25 missile.

The announcement that the United States would take out of service a Poseidon submarine later this year when the new Trident submarine goes to sea is to be welcomed. It is in sharp contrast to Soviet activity. Nevertheless, the tensions and strains in connection with SALT II and the ABM treaty have contributed to our uneasiness.

My last worry about the NATO Alliance relates to the south-east flank. I have recently been to Bulgaria with a number of other hon. Members. There we were told by senior members of the Government that Bulgaria is keen to promote a Balkan nuclear-free zone. There is little doubt that the initiative for that came from Moscow, to which Bulgaria offers close support. It is an idea which is easily accepted by Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria and even Albania, to whom no one would be silly enough to offer nuclear arms. It is an idea that is seductive to Greece, ruled as it is by the unpredictable Mr. Papandreou. In his bid for re-election, Mr. Papandreou offered as an election bid the expulsion of American bases in 1988—shades there perhaps of another Socialist party aspiring to government.

Only Turkey with its vital strategic position is not attracted by a nuclear-free zone, but who can tell what the effects of the current resurgence of Moslem fundamentalism will be on Turkey and its present western-inclined Government?

I am worried about the stability of the south-east flanks. I floated that anxiety in Washington last week and received a glib assurance from a staff man at the Pentagon that the Alliance is in fine shape. I remain to be convinced, because I believe that there are strains and tensions in the Alliance which run deeper than mere "domestic tiffs".

It behoves us all to work hard to conserve and foster the vitality and strength of NATO, our most important partnership. Opposition Members should drop their malicious and divisive proposals to throw out American bases or even some classes of American weapons. It is the height of hypocrisy to suggest that we should deny bases to American nuclear weapons whilst hoping that America will continue to offer us protection under its nuclear unbrella.

The threat posed to the Alliance by the erratic Mr. Papandreou is nothing when compared with the threat posed by those who would expel the Americans and their weapons from Britain. Such a catastrophe would surely spell an end to the Western Alliance.

7.52 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Like the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), I have been subject in Washington to briefings on SDI. It must be a growth industry at present in Washington. I reached conclusions slightly different from those of the hon. Gentleman. The doubts and reservations about SDI that transcend the political spectrum in Europe are well founded. It is difficult, for example, for those of us who have been brought up to believe that the deterrent has maintained peace throughout the post-war years suddenly to be told by the American Administraton that the whole idea of deterrence is immoral and will not last.

The critics of SDI are correct to suggest that it involves the risk that a potential aggressor will increase his offensive capability to swamp the defensive system. The critics are also right to suggest that, while the SDI approach has an impact on arms control, it may well lead to the unravelling of the ABM treaty, and cuts that we want to see in the INF and the START will be much more difficult in view of the American priority on the SDI.

If the SDI approach were to be effected it could well result in the decoupling of Western Europe from the United States, because the development of an SDI approach on both sides would undermine the effect of the United States nuclear guarantee to Western Europe.

Finally, there is the opportunity cost of the SDI operation. The sums of money involved, as we are aware, are gigantic. One cannot help feeling that they might be directed better to other parts of the defence budget.

It is not just money. I had the opportunity about a month ago to be in the national laboratory at Los Alamos in New Mexico looking at some of the techniques and technology involved in the SDI operation. The scientists there are in no doubt that SDI will attract the best and brightest brains in American physics. With the current state of the world, I cannot help thinking that their expertise and abilities might be better directed to other projects.

The American belief that it is possible to accommodate the improvements in conventional defence that are necessary, the modernisation of the nuclear deterrence and SDI during a period of pressure on defence budgets mirrors the belief of this Government that it is possible to have Trident and all the other improvements in defensive capability that we want.

I am glad to see that the Select Committee on Defence is examining the impact of Trident on the defence budget. I look forward with great interest to see what conclusions it reaches. I hope that it is rather more successful in getting clear answers from the Ministry of Defence than it has been in the past. I hope, for example, that the Committee does not find itself, as it was on this occasion, frustrated by vague and evasive answers, and elegant but unhelpful hypotheses.

It is perhaps worth recalling that the Select Committee on Defence studied the issue in 1981. It produced a detailed report after more than a year's investigation of the future of the strategic deterrent in this country. Even then the Select Committee on Defence had problems in obtaining clear information, because the report's first conclusion states:

"It is a matter of regret to us that we have found the Ministry unwilling to discuss in any detail the opportunity costs of purchasing the Trident system".

In recommendation 14, the Committee, in a sense, trailered the type of problem that we are discussing tonight. It said:

"Against the background of current reviews of defence, commitments and expenditure, it is very difficult to see how it will be possible to give top priority to the Trident programme throughout the decade without displacing or squeezing out some other equipment programmes."

That is part of the case against the Trident that has been deployed during the debate.

Conservative Members said yesterday, and they have said it again today, that there is no alternative to Trident. That ignores a good deal of the academic work done by Professor Freedman, Dr. David Greenwood and others which suggests that there are alternatives. The most likely alternative is a cruise system. The Minister of State merely dismissed the cruise alternative as being less effective and more costly. I am not aware of any recent work which the Government have produced which would show that cruise is more costly than Trident. There is a good deal of independent evidence to the contrary.

When it comes to effectiveness, no one would dispute that any form of cruise deterrent system would not be as effective and sophisticated as Trident. We must then face the question of what type of deterrent we need in this country. I argue that we need only the minimum deterrent. The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) correctly said that it would be a foolish waste of resources to purchase a deterrent which was not effective, but I would argue the reverse. It is equally foolish to waste resources on a deterrent which is far more sophisticated and accurate and which has a longer range than we need in this country. When we have a deterrent system whose warhead potential is 14 times the potential of Polaris, it is certainly too sophisticated for us. We should also bear in mind the impact of that on arms control negotiations.

I am surprised that hon. Members have attempted to devalue cruise. It is worth reminding ourselves that the United States is involved in massive investment in cruise. The United States' current programmes, for example, involve more than 5,000 air-launched cruise missiles, of which 1,000 are already deployed, and almost 2,000 sea-launched cruise missiles. The Department of Defence describes the Tomahawk cruise missile as

"a highly capable and versatile weapon system that can be launched from a variety of surface ships, submarines and aircraft."

I do not argue that the Tomahawk is a perfect replacement for Trident, but the way in which it has been dismissed in the debate runs contrary to the evidence before us.

Finally, I wish to comment on the issue of manpower in the armed forces. That is not mentioned in the White Paper. I notice that the Select Committee report states that the White Paper

"contains surprisingly little about recruiting, retention, pay and allowances, maintaining skills, morale and career prospects at a time when these issues are causing concern to service men and their families. More space should have been given to these aspects."

Yesterday the Secretary of State fairly referred to the problems of increased outflow from the armed forces as a result of pressure from industry. He referred to fierce competition from the private sector regarding technical posts. The picture that he presented was that that sort of competition from the private sector would become stronger as the economy improved and, presumably, unemployment became less of an automatic recruiting sergeant for the armed forces.

We must bear in mind that population changes make it difficult for us to get the manpower that we need in the armed forces. The reduction in the numbers of 16 to 19-year-olds in our population, for example, will continue throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Although the problem was referred to in the 1981 White Paper, it has not been referred to since. That problem will continue even beyond 1991. In 1983, for example, we had 1·929 million men in the 16 to 19 age range, but by 1995 that figure will have dropped to 1·39 million. I know that that is a general problem in Europe, but the Government must devote much more attention to it.

We can improve our reserve capability, but that will not solve all the problems. We can use modern technology to replace men, but that will not solve all the problems. We can pursue the strategy, which the Secretary of State set out yesterday, of trying to ensure that the armed forces keep pace with pay and conditions outside. That is right, but it will not solve all the problems. That is yet another area where the pressures of trying to make good deficiencies in manpower will add to the pressures on the defence budget. That brings us back once again to the impact of Trident.

[Mr. John Cartwright]

Because we do not believe that the Government are taking sufficiently seriously the impact of those budgetary problems on our defences, we shall not support them tonight. Equally, we shall not support the Labour amendment, because the commitment to remove all nuclear weapons from the United Kingdom is wholly irresponsible.

8.3 pm

Sir Paul Bryan (Boothferry): I declare my interest as a director of a shipping company, but also as one of a growing number of right hon. and hon. Members who have become concerned about the decline of our merchant fleet and, in particular, its ability to carry out its role in time of war. That growing anxiety has been reflected in the significant number of times to which the subject has been referred in the debate.

The lack of any evident will on the part of the Government to face that problem has been especially worrying. However, I feel rather more at ease this year about that than in last years debate, not because the decline has halted—far from it—but because I see signs that we are all at least beginning to face the issue. Last year the Government were still resting on their Falklands laurels. No criticism came from the public. After all, the Merchant Navy had more than proved itself in the campaign, when there were more merchant ships taking part than those of the Royal Navy. No mention of the Merchant Navy appeared in the Statement on the Defence Estimates, an extraordinary omission.

At that time the then president of the General Council of British Shipping and a few worried members of the shipping industry and of this House seemed to be the only warning voices to be heard. It was then that the Defence Select Committee played precisely the role that Select Committees should play. In its report last year, the dangers were for the first time exposed and an answer was demanded. That was backed up by two powerful speeches — one by the Chairman of the Defence Select Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins), and the other by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed), who as we heard again today is extremely knowledgeable about anything to do with the sea. Subsequently, my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) set up the all-party maritime group, supported by some of the most influential Members of the House. Finally, we have had the first report from the Defence Select Committee on the use of maritime shipping for defence purposes, which was published only this week. During the past year the pressure on the Government has really built up.

In this year's Statement on the Defence Estimates we have the interim reaction to that pressure. We are promised a major study by consultants into the future trend of availability of those parts of the merchant fleet for which there is a defence need. The results are due to be available by the middle of the year—in other words, very soon. That is a welcome sign that the Government appear to be waking up to the defence consequences of the decline in the British merchant fleet. The consultants' studies will surely secure a basis of facts, on which the continuing debate can be based, although the Defence Select Committee's report makes one wonder how far Ministers had taken the issues on board when they embarked on this course. Indeed paragraphs 25 and 31 of the report are pretty damning.

The first report published this week shows the Select Committee system working at its best. The Members have got their teeth into the subject, and will not let it go. While recognising the need for confidentiality, the consultants' report will clearly form the basis for discussions in the coming months. As much of it as possible should be published, and the Select Committee should be given full access to it.

Paragraph 9 of the report gives a clue to the reasons for apparent past ministerial disinterest. Few problems were likely to arise in the days when the merchant fleet was much larger than it is now, both in total and in respect of each of the ship types. When there was such a large pool of ships to draw on, one could afford errors in estimating the future size of the fleet. As the report says:

"fluctuations in the availability of ships for any reason would be covered by the excess of vessels in the Merchant Fleet over those required for defence purposes."

Meanwhile, before the report of the consultants, one of the most intractable problems has been brought to light by the Defence Select Committee report and by several hon. Members during this debate, and has been underlined in the presidential address of the new president of the GCBS, Mr. Brian Shaw. He said:

"another striking feature of British Shipping is how increasingly international it has become. Companies not only operate as partners in international consortia; they are sometimes multi-national companies in their own right. Moreover foreign ship owners no longer begin at Calais. Something like a quarter of British owned shipping is now registered outside the U.K. and the proportion is now rising."

He goes on:

"There is a growing fleet of British-owned ships sailing under a variety of non-United Kingdom flags. We have experienced the development of consortia, joint ventures, interlocking share-holdings across international boundaries and we have seen the management in operation of ships increasingly as an activity carried on quite separately from ship-owning."

Thus, the ease and speed with which the Government were able to commandeer the pick of the merchant fleet for the Falklands campaign was misleading. The time has come to establish what ships will be legally and practically available to the Navy in a longer term war.

Another feature of the shipping industry—common, I suppose, to most industries today — is the speed of change. It is not only the numbers and ownership of ships which are changing, but the types. Within a few years, the size of tankers doubled. The same is now happening with container ships, which are thus much more vulnerable in war.

The summary of the British merchant fleet, which I understand is now to appear yearly in the statement, assumes a new importance and should be in more detail to reflect the increasing specialisation which is the order of the day. For that reason, I commend paragraph 45 of the Select Committee's report. It is probably the most important recommendation in the document, for it says:

"We believe that in future Defence White Papers, the Merchant Navy should be treated formally as a defence resource. From now on, there should be statistical information on the availability of merchant shipping by category, including only those vessels susceptible to requisition."

It goes on to say that the manpower figures should also be given.

I hope that the consultants' report will go beyond the role of the Merchant Navy in its direct support duty to the

Royal Navy and will deal with the problem of keeping the country supplied in wartime, which was a large part of its duty in the last war. For example, the position of our ports in time of war needs consideration, as an increasing proportion of our supplies now arrive in container ships. Container terminals, which are dependent on a few huge cranes, must be more vulnerable than a conventional port. We were told in the Felixstowe debate that there was an excess of container terminal capacity in Britain. That may be inconvenient now, but it could be a great boon in time of war.

The report points out the extent to which responsibility for providing an adequate merchant fleet in wartime is divided between a number of Departments and, therefore, tends not to be the prime responsibility of any one Department. For instance, I do not suppose that the Merchant Navy's role in war was uppermost in the Chancellor's mind when he dealt the shipping industry such a blow in his 1984 Budget.

To meet the dilemma, my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton has advocated a Minister for Shipping. I doubt whether such a Minister would be senior enough to be effective. Nevertheless, we must find a method by which responsibility for the policy of shipping and the monitoring of its achievement is carried out at the highest level of Government.

8.14 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Despite the cosy and comforting tone of the White Paper, there are a number of disturbing areas which it does not address, one of which is secrecy. Another is the extent to which the United Kingdom has mortgaged its future, not only to the nuclear arms race but specifically to United States nuclear arms policy.

The White Paper has done nothing to lift the obsessive secrecy which pervades any important discussion about defence. As the Select Committee reports in paragraph 36:

"We wanted to examine in-service dates, operational life, scale and the phasing of expenditure. Our purpose was frustrated by vague and evasive answers and elegant but unhelpful hypotheses."

Many of my hon. Friends have had similar experiences with Ministers in recent months. For example, written answers were given to me on 29 October of last year on the question of FOFA, the follow-on force attack concept. I asked the Secretary of State what view of the FOFA concept had been taken by the NATO military committee, and was told that that committee's business was, by its nature, confidential. I then asked whether the FOFA concept would be on the agenda of the December meeting of NATO defence ministers, and I received the reply that the business of the ministerial committee was confidential —[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—"Hear, hear" say Conservative Members. They do not feel the same in America, because three days earlier General Rogers held a briefing for journalists and the details of that press conference were reported fully in the *International Herald Tribune* on 26 October. That clearly showed that he gave clear answers to the questions that I had asked our Minister.

The White Paper, in justifying the increase in the number of warheads of the Trident D5 purchase, says:

"The United Kingdom's deterrent force, when equipped with Trident, will remain the minimum size compatible with cost-effectiveness and credibility."

As the Government have not yet released details of the number of warheads that will be produced for the Trident system, how can the House judge either contention?

Ministers have repeatedly denied that "Air-Land Battle" has been used on NATO exercises. Yet Casper Weinberger told Congress that it was used on NATO's Reforger 82 exercise. He also made it clear that the declared intention of the United States Defence Department was to bring about European acceptance of the "Air-Land Battle" doctrine, involving the offensive use of chemical and nuclear weapons in deep attacks. Who is telling the truth, our politicians or American politicians?

I know who I prefer to believe. *[Interruption.]* I do not believe our politicians, and that is clear to all on the Opposition Benches. If we do not receive answers from Ministers, I cannot believe what they do not say— *[Interruption.]*—because they do not say it. They hide behind the tag of "confidential." In the United States, on the other hand, Congress is open on these issues and at press briefings full answers are given to questions that we in this House are denied.

Last week a group of Members of Parliament went on a visit to SHAPE and NATO for round-table discussions chaired by top military personnel, including Chief of Staff General James E. Dalton, General Bernard Rogers' chief of staff. When asked for information concerning battlefield nuclear weapons and about exactly what General Rogers had sought at the nuclear planning group at Montebello in 1983, he replied:

"The British Government has been told."

Pressed about the modernisation of the weapons, he said:

"It is up to your Government to tell you, not me."

Asked to what the allies were likely to agree, he said:

"Ask your own national Government."

That is precisely the problem. We ask hundreds of questions but find ourselves, like the Select Committee, frustrated by vague and evasive answers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) yesterday illustrated the point when he attempted to get answers to questions about American nuclear-tipped artillery shells and their deployment. How much longer in a so-called democratic society must we rely on the American press and Congress to give us the answers that our politicians should be giving us?

The White Paper says:

"We welcome this debate for it is vital in a democratic society that people should clearly understand the issues involved in maintaining defences sufficient to deter aggression. We believe it is appropriate, this year to address these questions in detail."

However, in effect, there is no debate. Nuclear weapons, our defence policy and the secrecy surrounding them are negating the very values in our society on which we so often pride ourselves.

What is even more sinister is that, while the Labour party intends to see that the defence of the United Kingdom is put on a rational and stable footing—if Conservative Members waited until the end of my sentence they would not laugh quite so hard—one of our major allies, the United States, is apparently prepared to frustrate the policy of a democratically-elected Government. When asked what the American reaction would be to a British Labour Government abandoning nuclear weapons for Britain, General Dalton replied that the United Kingdom has "a key geographical position". When asked what kind of pressure might be put on a future Labour Government and whether the pressure might

[Mrs. Ann Clwyd]

include economic sanctions, General Dalton replied, "It might be."—*[Interruption.]* Obviously Tory Members do not believe in democratically-elected Government.

When a democratically-elected Government was overthrown in Chile in 1979——

Mr. Boyes: Did not General Dalton also say that the American Government were pressurising the Government of Canada because they were not happy with their performance and that they were also dissatisfied with the 1 per cent. spending on defence in Japan and were going to put pressure on that Government as well? Does this not show the lengths to which the American Government will go to get their own way?

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank my hon. Friend for making that point. He also heard General Dalton say what I am telling Conservative Members, although they obviously do not want to listen.

Henry Kissinger said about Chile in 1979 that the revolution was in the best interests of the Chilean people. We have seen what the Americans are doing to a democratically elected Government in Nicaragua. We have seen their reaction to New Zealand, when that Government refused to toe the line.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Defence told us that each of us is a sovereign nation. That suggests that we have our destiny in our own hands. Can we believe that when we see how more powerful countries, and even multinational companies, can destroy the economy of a country by their actions?

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Can my hon. Friend elaborate that point? She appears to be announcing an important new papal doctrine from the lips of General Dalton. If the United States is prepared to inflict economic sanctions on Britain, they should remember that economic sanctions have political consequences. Interfering in the affairs of a democratic state amounts to a denial of the democratic system. Were there any witnesses to this statement? Can my hon. Friend give us the names of those present so that we can find out whether they can verify what she is saying? Obviously, NATO will have to respond to what my hon. Friend is saying.

Mrs. Clwyd: I thank my hon. Friend for making that important point. Nine Members of Parliament were present at this meeting, and during the round table discussions chaired by General Dalton there were also present Minister-Counselor Grey, from the United States, Rear Admiral John Rodocanachi from Canada, who is assistant chief of staff in the inteiligence division, a German general, Major General Jurgen Schluter, deputy assistant chief of staff, policy division, Rear Admiral Kenneth A. Snow, deputy assistant chief of staff, operations division and Air Commodore Pilkington.

The people at NATO were so concerned by what General Dalton had said that public relations men followed us about for the whole of the rest of the next day, apologising for the way in which General Dalton had responded to our inquiries. They said that he had been so frank because he was letting his hair down because he was retiring in July. We are extremely glad that General Dalton was prepared to let down his hair and be so frank about the intentions of the United States military if a future Labour Government were to implement their non-nuclear policy.

The Defence White Paper is a bland and complacent document. It completely ignores four things. The first is the growing absurdity of the so-called flexible response. The second is the extent to which the Government are prepared to mortgage our future to United States nuclear weapons policy. The third is the serious financial implications for our conventional forces if Trident is allowed to be constructed. The fourth is the need for clear and detailed information, not least on financial matters, if we are to have democratic debate in anything other than name. In short, the White Paper is much prose to little effect. It is thousands of words that do nothing to paper over the many cracks in Britain's defence posture, which the Government have brought about by muddled thinking and downright evasiveness.

8.26 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I am prepared to admire the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) for the way in which she has persevered with the issues that she has raised. However, I listened closely to her speech, but I could not agree with a word that she uttered from start to finish. There were two basic errors.

First, we would all be interested to learn the state of the art of communicating with our nuclear submarines. I would be fascinated — but so would people in the Kremlin. There must be rules and regulations about what is brought into the public domain. Secondly, it is incredibly naive to think that if there were an invasion of West Germany it would not be part of NATO's plan to attack forces piling up in East Germany. That has been part of NATO's defence strategy for many a year, and I hope it will continue to be so.

In many ways, the debate has an air of unreality. I cannot remember the golden years—they have certainly not been around for the past 20 years — when our defence budget was not under pressure. I remember only too clearly sitting on the Opposition Benches and watching with horror as Labour Ministers slashed the defence budget by about five or six times. If anybody thinks that a Labour party returned to government—I do not think that it will be — would increase spending on conventional weapons, he is living in a fool's paradise.

I am a 100 per cent. supporter of the Trident decision. I cannot think of a better weapons system to act as a deterrent. I find absurd two arguments in particular of those trotted out against it. The first is that it is too sophisticated. The Trident system is due to last until I reach the age of 82, when I hope to be coming up to being one of the older and perhaps more senior Members of the House. The thought of our not going for the latest and best technology when we have such a period of time ahead of us is absurd. Secondly, the concept that the present Polaris submarines should be allowed to continue beyond their natural lifetime is highly irresponsible. What about the poor crews who have to go to sea in them?

A vexed issue is the huge and increasing stocks of chemical weapons in the hands of the Soviet Union. Rather chillingly, the White Paper talks about 300,000 tonnes of nerve agencies. How should the West respond to that sort of threat? We might respond in three ways. First, we can look the other way and pretend that we do not know anything about it. I would not back any Government that

adopted that point of view. Secondly, we could develop our own offensive chemical weapons capability, a capability that we rightly gave up after the war. If one thinks through the implications both at home and abroad, it is not a course that I would recommend to my Front Bench. There is too much evidence that other countries follow one's bad examples, not necessarily one's good examples. The unilateral disarmers might remember that point.

There is a third response, which I call the Admiral Sir James Eberle solution, which is fairly brutal: that we should make it perfectly clear that we are not going to develop an offensive chemical weapons capability. I do not think that Congress will allow the United States to develop its stocks. We should also make it perfectly clear that if, in the event of hostilities, there were to be a major use of chemical weapons by the other side, we should feel free to give serious consideration to using tactical nuclear weapons in reply. That may fill many hon. Members with shock and horror, but it is facing reality.

I have always been in two minds about the Mount Pleasant airfield in the south Atlantic. Of course it was expensive and of course it would change the environment of the islanders, but the case for building it was probably overwhelming. I do not see how our garrison could be scaled down without it. The runway at Stanley will soon need to be repaired, anyway.

It is very important that our defence policy for the rest of this century should not be distorted by the Falklands campaign. That would be most foolish. Our defence posture in the Falklands is a burden on the defence budget. Admiral Stavely has referred to the shortage of ships in the north Atlantic. He claims that the fleet is at about half strength. It is a big naval commitment. For most of my political life Britain has been withdrawing its forces from the far-flung corners of the empire back to northern Europe and the north Atlantic. I do not see how we will have the ability in future to send another task force 8,000 miles down the Atlantic sea lanes. Should we have the merchant ships if a similar operation had to be carried out in a year's time, let alone in 10 years' time? I hope that the Ministry of Defence is feeding to the Foreign Office some of the long term implications of our strategy in that part of the world.

Finally, I wish to refer to a subject that is given a special little essay of its own in the White Paper, the British training teams abroad. They do a remarkable job. It is a rare privilege for a country to be invited to send training personnel to build up from scratch, or to rebuild the defence forces of a country. We have tremendous expertise. Some of our best soldiers, sailors and airmen are involved in these programmes. In real terms, however, we have cut back upon the expenditure on those programmes. I ascertained that fact from the Library this afternoon. I know that more people are serving abroad—in about 30 countries, I believe—but it is shortsighted to cut back on the amount of money that is put into that effort.

Our defence policy is very much on the right course. It backs up our foreign policy. Lord Home of the Hirsel used to refer to dealing in conciliation from a basis of strength. Our Foreign Secretary is, I understand, to be the first British Foreign Secretary to visit each eastern European capital. That policy is reinforced by the fact that in the last Parliament we spent so much time upon strengthening our defence capability. We are taken seriously. Lord Mountbatten made a famous speech in May 1979. It is much used by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. I see that on the CND bumf they write on top "The speech we overlooked." I did not overlook that speech. Lord Mountbatten said:

> "To begin with we are most likely to preserve the peace if there is a military balance of strength between East and West. The real need is for both sides to replace the attempts to maintain a balance through ever-increasing and even more costly nuclear armaments by a balance based on mutual restraint. Better still, by reduction of nuclear armaments I believe it should be possible to achieve greater security at a lower level of military confrontation."

That is very much where I stand. Anybody who read the major speech made by the Prime Minister in Hungary recently knows that is very much where my right hon. Friend stands. It is a thoroughly sound and sensible approach for this Government to adopt.

Ministers in the Ministry of Defence may feel that the campaign against CND has gone well, that our defence posture is sound and that to some extent, therefore, we can rest on our laurels. That is a fundamentally false assumption. A great deal of evangelical work lies ahead of us in two areas. First, the very success of NATO means that it is not understood by a growing number of people in our constituencies. Secondly, the need for NATO to have a back-up of nuclear weapons is not understood in the schools and universities of this country. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done there.

It used to be said of the Stonewall Jackson brigade in the American civil war that it started at dawn—except when it started the night before. I commend that sort of spirit to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. God forbid that he should have too many late nights, but let him and his colleagues get up early. They have a fundamental job to do of great importance to the safety of this country. They have to explain what our defence policy is all about. In return, my right hon. Friend has the privilege of responsibility for the finest, fittest, most skilled and most courageous service men in the world.

8.36 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I regret that I have to say to the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) that I agree with very little of his speech. However, he referred to his abhorrence of chemical weapons. I should like to say a few words about chemical weapons and their possible use in war. Paragraph 18 of Annexe A of the "Statement of the Defence Estimates" is headed "Chemical Weapons". This paragraph of 15 lines contains a vitally important sentence:

> "Among NATO members, only the United States has chemical weapons; but she has produced none since 1969 and has only a limited and ageing retaliatory capability, which is not declared to NATO."

That sentence raises a number of questions: what are these weapons? Where are they located? What does "not declared to NATO" really mean? One could even ask questions about their control.

Chemical and biological weapons are the subject of the Geneva protocol of 1925 which outlaws the use of these weapons. While nations agree to a no-first-use policy, it did not stop the signatories, including the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom from using them in retaliatory circumstances, nor did the protocol stop production and stockpiling. Chemical weapons are barbaric, destabilising and socially abhorrent, yet on a

[Mr. Roland Boyes]

recent visit to SHAPE and NATO the message to the parliamentary group was quite clear. In view of the Soviet Union's superiority in chemical stocks, it is necessary further to develop this type of weapon so that NATO military commanders have it at their disposal in a battle situation.

In a world where some countries have the capacity to use nuclear weapons not only to destroy the territory of an aggressor but to destroy all living matter on earth, to develop and deploy new chemical weapons is the height of criminal insanity. As a consequence, disarmament talks would become even more difficult as a new arms race began. It would undoubtedly lead to a proliferation of committees and increased tension and suspicion.

The Government's view on chemical weapons was put during a debate in another place. Lord Trefgarne echoed the Prime Minister when he said in the House of Lords on 23 April that Britain had abandoned its chemical warfare capability in the 1950s and that that policy had not changed, nor was any change proposed. So far so good. However, I shall now return to the questions that I proposed a few moments ago, and examine together Lord Trefgarne's statement and the text that I quoted from the White Paper. I shall demonstrate clearly that the Government are more closely linked to chemical weapons than they want the public to know.

For a start, the paragraph in the White Paper is misleading, because it does not let an uninformed reader know that the USA has chemical weapon stocks in the Federal Republic of Germany. It does not tell the reader what kind of weapons are stored there, and it misleads by suggesting that they are not part of NATO's armoury.

In the debate in another place to which I referred previously, Lord Trefgarne acknowledged the existence of the US chemical weapon stocks in the Federal Republic of Germany but dismissed the information given to him by Lord Mayhew when he said:

"I do not think he will be surprised when I tell him that it is not really a matter for me."

I am surprised that a Minister can utter those words when the United Kingdom is a member of NATO and US forces —except for a few on specialist duties—are committed to NATO and armed with chemical weapons.

Lord Trefgarne also emphasised, in replying to a point raised by Lord Kennet, the need to uphold NATO's deterrent strategy of flexible response. In reply to another of Lord Kennet's points about chemical weapon release procedures, he said:

"Political control of the limited US stocks is therefore naturally a matter for them."

I shall return to the question of political control procedures, but, as the writers say, the plot is beginning to thicken.

Further evidence to substantiate the link is provided by David Summerhayes, disarmament adviser to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office — at the time of writing, anyway—and former head of the British delegation to the Committee on Disarmament. His article, entitled, "Chemical Weapons: Postures, plans and prospects for control", was printed in the November/December 1983 edition of "Review", which is published by the armament and disarmament information unit at Sussex university. He wrote:

"The US is the principal stockholder of chemical weapons for the NATO alliance, with the bulk of these stocks held as filled munitions or in storage tanks in the Continental US."

But he also said that

"NATO has only a small stock of US-provided chemical weapons in West Germany . . . while the remainder would have to be transported across the Atlantic if an attack were ever launched against NATO".

That is quite explicit. It is NATO that has the chemical weapon stock, and the United Kingdom is a member of NATO.

Mr. Conway: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Boyes: No, I am trying to finish my speech.

Another piece of evidence demonstrating that this country is closer to chemical weapons than many understand is Casper Weinberger's report to Congress in 1982 that the United States' doctrine of airland battle had been used during the NATO exercise code named Reforger. Airland battle is described in the "US Army Field Manual 100-5" as follows:

"By exending the battlefield and integrating conventional, nuclear, chemical and electronic means, forces can exploit enemy vulnerabilities anywhere."

The Secretary of State emphasised yesterday the United Kingdom's commitment to the doctrine of flexible response, and this allows a wide range of weapons to be used in the face of an attack by an aggressor. Further, General Rogers has asked for the production by the West of the new binary chemical weapons, and for them to be stored in Europe.

The several pieces of evidence that I have cited demonstrate clearly that, despite the Government's posturing against chemical weapons, they are double-dealing with the public because they have committed British troops to a military alliance that has chemical weapons in its armoury. Furthermore, one of the countries, the USA, is developing new, more powerful and more deadly chemical weapons. We are in danger of entering a period that could lead to a disaster of catastrophic proportions. Will the Minister comment on the anticipated role of British troops if General Rogers decides to deploy chemical weapons?

Another aspect of the policy raises important questions. In reply to a parliamentary written question from my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), asking for a statement on the work of the Chemical Defence Establishment at Porton Down, the Minister replied that the primary role of the CDE is to carry out research and development in order to improve our defences against attack by chemical weapons. That answer hides the vast amount of research carried out for the Ministry of Defence and the CDE at Porton Down by universities and other institutions.

Earlier this year, representatives of the group of scientists working party on chemical and biological weapons met Members of Parliament in the House of Commons and stressed the concern about the growth of funding by the MOD in universities. In fact, they said that the level is so high that it threatens the whole direction of higher education. The working party also stressed that some of the research was related to chemical and biological weapons.

A further example of university involvement is contained in an advertisement in the 16 May issue of the *New Scientist*. Applications were invited for research studentships at the university of Southampton, and one of them was for research on

"novel synthetic approaches to some of the toxins and related alkaloids."

It was in the name of Dr. P. J. Parsons and CDE Porton.

What research is being carried out in our universities on chemical weapons, and how much are the Government hiding by placing the research with outside bodies? Those are very serious questions that need to be answered.

Much pressure is being exercised in the United States by the President and the military for the development and deployment of new chemical weapons, particularly the big eye bomb and the 155 mm shell. Although the binary chemical weapon, the big eye bomb, is flawed, pressure is mounting for its deployment.

According to the *Washington Post* of 31 May this year, Deputy Assistant Defence Secretary, Thomas J. Welch, said, in an interview, that

"Big eye is lethal enough to kill enemy troops. It is a bonus and we are not going to give it away because the chemical isn't pure."

Such is the haste of the Administration in the United States to get the bomb on to the soil of Europe. Those weapons are intended for Europe, and in particular for areas such as mine, in the north-east of England. Primary targets will be airfields, docks and shipyards, because the use of those weapons will be to slow down supply lines. The military would not be particularly interested in using them in battle situations because it would slow down its own troops, with the enormous amount of protective clothing needed—and, of course, the gas would spread uncontrollably.

Civilians are not to be equipped against the danger with the necessary specialist equipment. None of the research that I know of at Porton Down—and I have visited the establishment — is aimed at providing people in the docks and civilians on airfields with the necessary clothing. The people I represent would like to know, as a matter of urgency, the Government's real position, and it would help if the Government would give detailed answers to the following questions. What did the British Government actually say to President Reagan's review commission on chemical warfare when it visited Britain in March this year? What are the exact terms of and our obligations to the quadrupartite agreement on chemical weapons? How would the Government respond if big eye were deployed in Europe? Finally, what research on chemical weapons is being carried out in British universities and similar institutions?

The whole of human life on earth is already in great danger of total annihilation. A decision to manufacture and deploy chemical weapons might be the one that pushes us over the ever-looming abyss. All of us in this House have a duty to our families and to the people we represent to prevent the seemingly inevitable from happening. Only by destroying, not adding to, existing weapon stocks can we build the peace that we all desire.

The Secretary of State said that nuclear weapons had kept the peace for 40 years. I think that my right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) destroyed that argument yesterday. However, the Secretary of State is not talking of peace; he is talking about the absence of war. I and my colleagues want to live in a world of mutual understanding between nations and real peace.

8.50 pm

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): I marvel that the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) could speak for 14 minutes on chemical weapons without making any reference to the 300,000 tonnes of modern binary weapons held by the Soviet Union. But, of course, we well know the standpoint of the hon. Gentleman and many of his hon. Friends. They are concerned to draw attention to outdated 20-year-old residual American offensive capability.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the clarity of his White Paper and the wide range of information that it contained. I noted his criticism of the Defence Committee's report on the defence commitment and resources in his robust opening speech. What he is achieving through competition and increased efficiency is of very great importance. I certainly welcome what he is doing. I wish that I could share his belief that the savings will be on a scale great enough to bridge the resources gap that appears to be looming.

From next year, not only are we to abandon the 3 per cent. commitment, but in each of the two following years there will be a net reduction in real terms in defence expenditure, albeit very small. But, as the Chief of Defence Staff pointed out to the Defence Committee, the real danger is that zero growth could end up as negative growth with a shortfall of up to 7 per cent.

The position inevitably will be aggravated by the fact that forces' pay is running ahead of the normal retail price index. Technological information in modern military equipment is running ahead by a factor of two or three of that index, and there are the exchange rate effects on the Trident purchase. All those are to be found at the expense of something else in the defence budget. If my right hon. Friend's optimism does not prove well founded—and I hope that it will be—cuts in manpower, capability and commitments are inevitable.

It is tragic that the Labour party that has for so long played such an honourable part in the defence of this country should have abandoned the bipartisan policy that has guaranteed our country's peace for 40 years. The Labour party of today would make itself the Trojan horse for the fulfilment of the key Soviet strategic and foreign policy objective of the unilateral nuclear disarmament of the United Kingdom, the removal of American bases from this country and the consequent break-up of NATO as an effective deterrent to war and to Soviet expansionism in Europe.

Other speakers have referred to the report on the use of merchant shipping for defence purposes. I merely make the point that, for the first time, we as a nation do not have sufficient merchant vessels in each category to meet our war requirements. The British merchant fleet has dropped from 1,600 in 1975 to a mere 700 eight years later. It is continuing to decline at the rate of about 100 per annum. How much longer are we to tolerate the unfair competition from the Soviet Union, both in cruise ships and in freight? How much longer are we to use British taxpayers' money to give our Soviet bloc competitors an advantage? I have in mind that magnificent deal whereby we build ships for the Polish merchant fleet to put British seamen and British shipping lines out of work. Surely that should be urgently reconsidered by my right hon. Friend in consultation with his colleagues.

I come now to the strategic arms race, to SDI and to the whole question of arms control. We have reached a critical point in the strategic arms race and the prospects for arms control. President Reagan has declared that the United States will continue to observe the SALT II

[Mr. Churchill]

limitations, which will involve the decommissioning of a United States Poseidon submarine, in spite of what the United States believes to be a clear violation of the existing arms control agreement.

I welcome the President's decision, for without it the prospects of achieving in Geneva meaningful progress in arms limitation talks would have been slim indeed. However, as we are currently faced with negotiating with a new and more vigorous Soviet leadership, and as we stand on the threshold of dramatic developments in military technology, it is important to take stock of the position today.

Since the signing of the ABM treaty in 1972, the strategic balance between the superpowers has undergone a major transformation. Those fundamental changes are today placing extreme pressures on existing arms control treaties.

Since 1972, the Soviets have been working all out to acquire a first strike capability—something that they are close to achieving. Since that date, they have deployed more than 650 SS18S and SS19 missiles with a total between them of more than 5,000 independently targetable nuclear warheads, which combine the accuracy of 250 yards with a destructive power of half a megaton, which gives both of those categories of missiles a silo-busting capability. On the other hand, the Americans have no more than 900 comparable warheads, namely, the Minuteman 3, with the mark 12A warheads.

The chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Vessey, has testified that already 70 to 75 per cent. of the United States Minuteman force could be destroyed in a pre-emptive strike. That figure is expected to rise to as high as 90 or 95 per cent. within the next few years with the deployment of the fifth generation Soviet ICBMs. That degree of imbalance between the superpowers in first strike capability not only might incline the Soviet leadership towards a dangerous gamble — although that has not been inherent in its nature thus far — but more realistically makes likely a position in which the United States might feel constrained to launch on warning. Such a position is profoundly unsatisfactory, destabilising and dangerous because there would be less than 30 minutes in which to assess the threat and take decisive action. This enormously increases the possibility of mistakes.

The Soviet Union is not only far ahead of the United States in first-strike capability but has the only operational anti-ballistic missile system in the world and has demonstrated an anti-satellite capability, achieving success in four of its last five tests. In defiance of the ABM treaty, the Soviet Union has established a large phased-array radar at Kransnoyarsk in central Soviet Union and has tested its SA5 and SA12 surface-to-air missiles in an ABM mode close to 100,000 ft, far higher than any aircraft can fly.

This combination of factors has provided the urgency behind the President's decision to forge ahead with SDI, which holds profound implications for our national interests for arms control. It is not up to us whether this technology goes ahead. It is not even up to the United States. The Soviets are forging ahead. For a decade already they have been spending as much on defence as offence.

It is vital that the United Kingdom should form its view and exercise its powers of influence over our great ally to ensure that the right decisions are taken at this critical time. I trust that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will move quickly to identify those areas of research that will have application to British defence interests. It is obvious that, if we are to be participants in research, our influence will be far greater than that of a bystander. We must be involved. We must make sure that Britain's voice is heard.

9 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was rather peeved at some of the points made by the Select Committee on Defence. His colleagues on the Front Bench received it with a certain stoicism which, I suppose, we can respect. If they are not pleased at the quality of our report and do not believe that we have got it right, to a large extent that is their fault. Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made much of the fact that the ability to cope with defence commitments on the present admittedly high plateau without increases had a thoroughly sound defence basis. It was militarily sound; it was acceptable; and they could cope. That may be the case today — although the Committee had its doubts—but it certainly was not the case when the decision was made two years ago. At that stage, neither my right hon. Friend nor his team had looked at the problem. It was a political decision. Therefore, it was totally reasonable for the Select Committee to look at what might be a perfectly correct and sound political decision to ascertain the defence and military fall-out from that decision.

If we got it wrong — my right hon. Friend the Minister of State said that he would have come up with a different answer — I say, "Give us further and better particulars" because we want to arrive at a sensible solution and to form an informed judgment for the House and the country. I speak only for myself, but I suspect that I would carry my Select Committee colleagues with me. If we have not got it right, it is because of the decision taken at the highest level by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his team that there are certain aspects of future defence policy that they are not prepared to share with the Defence Committee. That saddens me. Perhaps they do not trust us. I have had the privilege of being on that Select Committee for six years. Not one secret or confidence has leaked out. Whatever the Government have told us — they have given us some extremely sensitive information—it has remained within the four walls of the Committee Room. We have never let anything get out, so the Government should trust us.

If the Government believe that they must be diverse in their options during the next four or five years, that is something that, again, the Committee would understand. The Committee believes that there is a serious problem ahead. We have tried to report on it. If we have not got it right, it is largely the fault of Ministers and officials in the Ministry of Defence who have not shared the problems with us as we hoped.

My next point concerns Trident and the nuclear deterrent. I shall skate over the argument quickly. The leader of the SDP made an uncharacteristically bad speech yesterday. I say "uncharacteristically" because normally he is pretty sound on defence. Yesterday, he was in tremendous difficulty because he had the CND wing of the

alliance sitting behind him and many young Liberals sitting outside waiting to jump on any sensible defence remarks that he made to show that the Liberal wing of the alliance speaks for a very different voice from that of the right hon. Gentleman.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) remarked on the horror that would be felt in the United States. He said that last week he had been in the Congress when the Americans realised the consequences of our decision not to increase the defence budget from 1986. We went there just before Easter and spoke to the Senate armed services committee—Senator Nunn, who in the past has been critical of our European defence efforts, was there—and to the House armed services committee. They were well aware of the difficulties that we would face because they were facing up to them. They were looking at the consequences of what would happen.

I am sure the House will agree that, were the Americans or the Alliance to be alarmed because we were unable to devote more financial resources to our defence budget over the next few years, that would be nothing to the alarm and instability within the Alliance that would follow a unilaterial decision by the United Kingdom to opt out of the nuclear business.

I shall not go into the military arguments, but I hope that the Minister will say something about the political arguments. They are much too neglected, and many people outside this House do not understand them. We must consider the effect among the people of the United States if it was felt that we were opting out of a responsibility that we have carried for the last 30 years —*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) may laugh, but there is a streak of isolationism in the United States, as anyone who has spent some time there will realise. It is under the surface. So long as America feels that Europe is making a sufficient effort in the defence of the West things will be fine, but if it believes that we shall merely load more responsibilities on to the United States and live under their defence umbrella that will have a destabilising effect.

The consequences within the European part of the NATO Alliance will also be extremely grave. We occupy a very special position among the European partners of NATO, and we can look with pride on what we have done. However, if we declined to contribute our nuclear deterrent to NATO, we would fundamentally change the relationships and responsibilities within that Alliance. That would change the whole perspective of the Alliance, vis-a-vis West Germany, which provides more conventional forces and assets in the European theatre than we are able to do. This would unbalance the way in which the Alliance is structured and the way in which we play such a leading part, both politically and militarily.

We may talk about the military balance between conventional and nuclear forces and the desirability of a deterrent which, while cheaper, would be less effective——

Mr. Speaker *rose*——

Mr. Mates: I notice that you are about to bring my remarks to an end, Mr. Speaker, but I was told that I could speak until 9.10 pm.

Political destabilisation would in the long term be far more serious for the Alliance, because we might be able to overcome any military destabilisation with American assistance.

9.7 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): As a non-member of the Select Committee on Defence, it is nice to have an opportunity to contribute to the debate. I must declare an interest, because I still serve with the Territorial Army in the light infantry battalion, and that will add a certain bias to my few remarks.

Paragraph 418 of the statement, which relates to the British Army of the Rhine, says that 55,000 troops are based in BAOR, with a further 100,000 reinforcements, but many hon. Members may not appreciate that 50 per cent. of infantry reinforcements are formed in the Territorial Army.

Paragraph 420 explains that 1(BR) Corps faces a substantial tank threat. In that regard, I was delighted to hear the Secretary of State announce yesterday that a sixth regiment is to get Challenger main battle tanks. I hold a biased view on this matter, because the engines are manufactured in my constituency. That was an extremely welcome announcement, as was the announcement that we are to get more MCV80s, the armoured fighting vehicle, and Saxon, the armoured personnel carrier. They are manufactured in Shropshire, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley), and fortunately many of my constituents are employed there.

The statement goes on to mention the role of the Milan anti-tank guided weapon system and anti-tank weaponry. I hope that while we all call for more expenditure on conventional defence we shall envisage a greater establishment of that anti-tank guided weapons system for the Territorial Army element—15 and 49 brigades—which forms part of the reinforcements for 1(BR) Corps.

Only a few weeks ago the Commander of the United Kingdom Field Army and Inspector General of the Territorial Army spoke in the media of the balance between the Territorial Army and the Regular Army which provides the main core of instructors for the Territorial Army. He rightly reminded politicians that, although he welcomed the expansion of the Territorial Army, as I hope we all welcome it, we must bear in mind the demands that it places on the Regular Army and the instructors that it is required to provide for the 73,000-strong Territorial Army.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to that welcome expansion. The increase in equipment is also welcome, but we must also keep a sharp eye on morale in the Territorial Army. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will be able to give some encouragement today to those members of the Territorial Army who are unemployed. The issue has been raised many times since I came to the House and Ministers from both the MOD and the DHSS have promised that it will be investigated. Those who are honest enough to declare that they receive pay from the Territorial Army have their benefit stopped immediately by the DHSS, although there may be a delay of six weeks and often much longer before they receive their Territorial Army pay. That causes great hardship to those who give their time and declare their earnings legitimately, as so many in the black market do not. I hope that the Government will take this on board as a matter of continuing concern to Members in all parts of the House who support the Territorial Army.

Finally, I should place on record a special word of thanks to the employers who support the Territorial Army.

[Mr. Derek Conway]

Their business is clearly affected, as they lose staff for at least 14 days training per year. Fortunately, however, employers in this country are prepared to do that and to encourage the Territorial Army in that way. I am sure that that support is greatly welcomed by Members in all parts of the House.

9.12 pm

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): In this lengthy two-day debate many hon. Members have participated. The debate has perhaps lacked cut and thrust because with the 10-minute rule people are naturally reluctant to give way unduly. I do not wish to break any conventions in that respect but if the opportunity arises we shall have to see what happens.

The debate was preceded by a variety of leaks and considerable speculation, much of which seems to have been distressingly accurate in respect of the Secretary of State. Virtually everyone who spoke referred to the report produced by the Select Committee on Defence and to the evidence that that Committee considered. Members in all parts of the House agree that the spending spree is over or at least is coming to an end. The right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) said that more money would have to be found even from this most parsimonious of Governments, but I do not think that any extra money will be forthcoming so the anxieties expressed by Members in all parts of the House about their pet projects are doubtless well founded. Certainly, I do not think that there is much likelihood of adopting the policy suggested by the SDP—that everything would be all right if we would only employ sea-launched cruise missiles, which that part of the alliance at any rate seems to regard as the acceptable face of nuclear war.

Our amendment makes it clear that we want no part of Trident and that a Labour Government would cancel it forthwith. We have heard many speeches for and against Trident, including some rather reluctant support from Conservative Members, but the Government seem determined to proceed with the project regardless of the cost. There is now time for an assessment of the cost. We have had the debate about rising and falling exchange rates, but it is important that there be some detailed examination of costs. The Select Committee would appear to be the most appropriate vehicle for such an examination.

In 1982, missiles would have accounted for 17 per cent. of the cost, or £1,278 million. That cost appears to have dropped to 14 per cent. in 1985. If those figures are correct, they can have been caused by one of three reasons. First, missiles cost 30 per cent. less in dollars than they did in 1982. Secondly, the reduction might be accounted for by a drop in production costs in dollars, although that is unlikely. Thirdly, some of the missile costs might have been switched elsewhere. Spending less on missiles would be consistent with having only three Trident submarines. That option has not been discussed today, but it must be exercising the Government. It is possible to have three submarines — one in refit, one in base and one operational. That would be the last face-saving gesture if the Government wished to retain the independent nuclear deterrent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) considered communication and control facilities, and my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) referred to the problems of communication and control in the south Atlantic. If we could not get that right—nobody denies the difficulties—the facilities that we operate for Polaris must be upgraded. We do not want Trident but were we to have it and to have a system of communication and control——

Mr. Adam Butler: This seems to be an obsession of the Labour party today.

Mr. O'Neill: The Minister says that this is an obsession. It is an illustration of a cost which the Government have never stated. The Secretary of State slid over it yesterday and the Minister of State refused to answer questions about it today. Nevertheless, it could cost upwards of £600 million. It has never been made clear to the House whether that cost has been included in the budget or whether it will have to come along later. In the light of experience of the increasing cost of such projects, it is only reasonable to raise the matter now. We want to know whether £600 million is an accurate figure for a command and control system, whether it has been included in the budget and, if it has not, where the money will come from.

We are extremely worried about other aspects of the procurement side of Trident. The claims about the amount of work which would go to British companies have not been met. If the costings done on an exchange rate of $1·78 to the pound are to be taken account of now, when the exchange rate is about $1·25 to the pound——

Sir Humphrey Atkins (Spelthorne): $1·28.

Mr. O'Neill: $1·28 today, $1·26 yesterday and $1·24 the day before. Unlike the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins), I have not had the luxury of an opportunity to look at the tapes this evening. Instead of quibbling about figures such as that, the Defence Select Committee, of which the right hon. Gentleman is Chairman, should examine this major item of expenditure again and seek clear information about these matters, not least the British share of contracts for the project, which seem at the moment to be at a depressingly low level.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): How does the hon. Gentleman answer the question that the costs of the Tornado programme were half as much again as Trident on a much smaller budget? Therefore, is not all this spurious? Is not the Labour party just against Trident, with no intention of moving the £500 million a year that would be saved into any conventional area?

Mr. O'Neill: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has raised that point. It is about time that we pinned this one to the wall. Frankly, they are not valid comparisons—the two budgets are extremely different. When Tornado was being funded, it was on the basis of a rising budget. We have been told that at best there will be level funding for the next four years. Therefore, there is no comparison on that basis.

The impact on our conventional defence—our "real defence", as our amendment says — is all too clear. Virtually every speech made by hon. Members on both sides of the House has returned to the theme that we do not have enough money, and certainly the biggest single element in the budget will be Trident expenditure.

More than anything else, reference has been made to the provision of type 23 frigates. We welcome the

announcement; we are happy about it. However, we want to know from the Minister when the hulls will be laid, and whether the target of providing us with a fleet of 50 ships will be met by the end of the decade. The Minister of State for Defence Procurement did not make that clear. He did not tell us what would be happening beyond next year. The year after that there will be a Labour Government, and a different set of priorities. However, the Government of the day owe it to the Navy and the country to explain what will happen in the ordering of type 23s.

Many ships will be up to 25 years old within a couple of years, and they will have to be replaced. Of the 12 frigates and destroyers that are at present on order, three were ordered under the Labour Government. There will be increasing problems with aging craft in a short time. If the Government want to secure a fleet of 50 ships which, by and large, is agreed as being desirable on both sides of the House, they will have to set in train a more positive plan of ordering than the present plan, given that it will take between five and six years from the date of ordering to completion.

The Minister did not intervene yesterday when the right hon. Member for Spelthorne, the Chairman of the Select Committee, attacked my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) about the costing for those frigates. The figure of £110 million has been quoted. A figure of £150 million was quoted in yesterday's edition of *The Times*. Perhaps the Minister will let the House know which of those figures is correct.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: It is in the Estimates.

Mr. O'Neill: It is there, but it has been in there before, and it has changed. The most up-to-date costings suggest that it is more than that. Perhaps the Minister will give a revised figure.

If we cannot get such information, we want to know when the hulls will be laid. Many hon. Members were concerned about the Secretary of State's response to the other ships that were being requested—the amphibious class. Many people took offence at the Secretary of State's carping criticism of officials, the people whom he was seeking to blame for the leaks and the campaign for replacements for Hermes and Invincible. Apparently, people leaking under a Labour Government are acceptable and should be cheered along, but people who do so under a Conservative Government are to be condemned.

We realise that not for those individuals will be the fate that was provided for Sarah Tisdall, because they are too influential. What they are saying has too much support on Conservative Benches. At the end of the day, the Government will have to provide the backing for amphibious craft that the country wants. The Government will take on junior clerks and clerical officers, but they will not take on the brass hats—they will simply try to insult them from the Dispatch Box.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed anxiety about the merchant marine. We are grateful to the Select Committee for its report, and I understand why, at this stage, the Minister is reluctant to debate it. However, I cannot stress strongly enough the purposes of the Merchant Navy, which include the transatlantic reinforcement of Europe, the reinforcement of Europe from the United Kingdom, transferring British and American equipment to Europe and direct support for the Royal Navy. The gross registered tonnage of the fleet has declined by about 59 per cent.—from 50 million tonnes in 1975 to 18·642 million tonnes last year—and the number of ships has declined from more than 1,600 to just over 700. Those figures are extremely worrying, because we know the role that the merchant marine played in the south Atlantic and that it would have to play in any conventional war.

We know from the Select Committee report that the Government are confused. Paragraph 13 states:

"The use of statistics on several different bases does not . . . affect the actual availability of hulls needed for defence purposes. Nevertheless, it is essential to assess defence needs as a proportion of the total fleet; and the use, even by the Government, of different statistics for the latter has confused debate and has made the Government's response less convincing."

Mr. Colvin: Will the hon. Gentleman pay tribute to what my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, whose presence on the Front Bench this evening is appropriate, said about the Merchant Navy? Is not the Minister who should be here the Chancellor of the Exchequer, since it is fiscal policy that is at fault? It is one reason why there is so much flagging out and why, because of unfair competition from overseas countries that subsidise their fleets and practise protectionism, the merchant fleet is declining at such a rate. Should not the Chancellor be here?

Mr. O'Neill: The hon. Gentleman has made his point, despite being denied the opportunity to make a speech. The Opposition believe that the Chancellor should be blamed for almost everything. However, I am grateful that the Under-Secretary of State for Transport is here this evening.

The Select Committee report is littered with examples of confused thinking from the Government. There is confusion about the availability of ships for requisition and about the state of ships that have been flagged out. We await the report of the shipping economics advisory group. It will probably take both Departments about two months to come to a conclusion. When they reach a conclusion, I hope that it will be the subject of a debate in Government time. I hope that, as a result of the Select Committee report, we shall have a clear definition of the collection of data, the instructions or advice that the consultants were given. So far, there has been a clear lack of preparation and foresight by both Departments in giving any instructions to the consultants. That is not in keeping with the Prime Minister's statement that the Merchant Navy should be regarded as the fourth part of our defences.

Ships' crews are another difficulty. Not only do we need ships, but we need men to serve on them. There has been a steady outflow of men from the Merchant Navy and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) said, the Government take into account men on oil-related work in the North sea, which might not be the most appropriate training for the work that would be undertaken during a war. If that requires Government money, as has been said, we may be able to use the Department of Transport, because if the Ministry of Defence does not have the money perhaps the Department of Transport can be touched for some of the resources required.

Other points have been mentioned. The royal dockyards and SDI were referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West and the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes). Unfortunately, the hon.

[Mr. O'Neill]

Lady is not here. Her request for an extension of the consultative period on the royal dockyards was a perfect example of the ingenuity of a Back Bencher who does not want to appear too disloyal to her Government.

There is no way that there will be a change in the timetable for consultations, as far as I can see. If there is a change in that consultative process the legislative programme for them will be scuppered. The Government would not then be able to rush through the Bill next year and, as they hope, have it passed before a general election.

In the long term, of course, there is the issue of star wars. It will not go away. The current special diplomatic initiative of the Reagan Administration will be with us for some time. I am confident that Conservative Back Benchers are somewhat out of step with the Foreign Secretary who seems to be a good deal more sceptical about the value of SDI than most of the people who have slavishly followed the propaganda that the American Administration have been pouring out.

Any suggestion that we shall see a practical demonstration of SDI within three years is wishful thinking. It will be impossible. I hope that it will not happen because it will be at the expense of the ABM treaty. I am relieved to know that we cannot be involved in the project because we cannot afford it. Thoughts of our hi-tech industries becoming involved in it are unrealistic. Given the budget about which we are talking today, no amount of competitive tendering, fixed-price contracts or shaving of expenditure will enable us to indulge officially in the star wars fantasies.

The Labour party's responsibility towards defence is to ensure that the country plays its role in NATO and to ensure that a Britain free of nuclear bases can assist in restoring stability to Europe and, I hope, to the rest of the world by committing the resources necessary to prove to the Americans, our other Alliance partners and the Soviet Union that we are interested in peace and disarmament but that we are prepared to defend Britain in a way that is consistent with our resources and our standing in the world. The White Paper does not do that, and, therefore, I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to join me in opposing the motion.

9.33 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): If the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) wants his party to play its role in NATO, it should take some account of what NATO thinks of the Labour party's current policies which it regards as detrimental to NATO's interests.

We have had an interesting debate. I am sorry that some of my hon. Friends who have waited patiently through one day, and possibly two, have been unable to contribute.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) made a far-reaching statement on nuclear weapons policy on behalf of the official Opposition. I listened carefully. He said that his party's policy was to get rid of all nuclear weapons in this country. I should be grateful if he would clarify—I shall of course give way to him—whether it is the Labour party's policy to get rid of British nuclear weapons as well as American nuclear weapons.

Mr. McNamara: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming that. I hope that he and the rest of his party are giving considerable thought to the extraordinarily anomalous and ridiculous position of depriving British Armed Forces of nuclear weapons in this country and having nuclear weapons still at their disposal elsewhere. That is a ludicrously inconsistent policy, and he should recognise it.

Much the most telling speech from Opposition Members came from the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George), who told his colleagues that being a Socialist does not mean denying the citizenry adequate defence. He stressed the difficulty that the Labour party would face in convincing British citizens at the general election that they would be adequately defended by Labour policies. He was absolutely right.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) referred to our policy on dockyards. She asked whether a contractor would be able to manage for more than five or six years. We have said that at the end of the initial contract the management of the dockyards will be thrown open to fresh tenders. Clearly, that is the best way of ensuring adequate competition, and keen prices and performance. However, there is no reason why a contractor whose performance has been good should not win a renewal of his contract.

My hon. Friend also asked about compulsory redundancies. To make the necessary improvements in the dockyards we need to begin efficiency measures now before the introduction of contractor management. We believe from our experience that the bulk of any jobs reductions can be achieved by natural wastage, early retirement and voluntary redundancy. While compulsory redundancies cannot be ruled out, we expect them to be largely avoided.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) asked about comparisons between refitting Euryalus and Otter in the private sector and the cost of work done in the royal dockyards. A direct comparison with a Leander frigate and a submarine being refitted at Devonport will be made, and the Ministry is establishing a special exercise to ensure that as detailed and accurate a comparison as possible is made.

Mr. Douglas: The Minister's earlier remarks do not sound as if the Government are open minded about the three options. He has given a far indication that the Government's preferred option is the only option and, therefore, that the consultation period is a farce.

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman would not be right in coming to that conclusion. We have made it clear that our mind is open and that we are conducting consultations.

A great deal of the debate has inevitably been taken up with weapon systems and the question of the defence budgets, to which I shall return. As hon. Members pointed out, the men and women of the armed services are every bit as important. Those who keep aircraft serviceable around the clock in the freezing Falklands weather, those who live and work cheek by jowl for months on end in submarines, and those daily at risk of bomb or bullet in Northern Ireland are just a few of those in our Armed Forces of whom our country and those of all political complexions are justly proud.

The Government are aware of their responsibility to give those men and women a fair and proper reward for

their skills and for the demanding and sometimes dangerous circumstances in which they serve. I can fairly say that the Government's record on looking after the Armed Forces pay and conditions is thoroughly creditable and, certainly, a significant improvement on that of our predecessors.

When we came to office in May 1979 the annual rate for premature voluntary retirement exits of men across the three services had risen to 4·4 per cent., which is the highest level recorded during the past 10 years. In addition, the Labour Government had allowed service pay to fall significantly behind the rate recommended by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body. In contrast, I am glad to say that in 1984-85 the rate of premature voluntary retirement exits was down to barely more than half what it was when we came to office.

In addition, as a result of the full and non-phased implementation of the AFPRB's 1985 pay recommendation announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister last week, service pay is currently right up to the recommended AFPRB rate. Indeed, apart from a seven-month period last year, that has been the case throughout the entire six years we have been in office.

Sir Paul Hawkins (Norfolk, South-West): I entirely agree with what my right hon. Friend has been saying. However, will he look into the question of amenities at some stations, particularly RAF stations, where the facilities for service men, their wives and families have fallen considerably? In my constituency, at RAF Marham, the swimming pool and theatre have been closed for two or three years.

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend has ingeniously introduced a constituency point which he has already raised with me. We shall look into the matter. It does not offset the basic point that I made, namely, that on service pay and conditions generally we have done creditably since 1979.

A number of hon. Members referred to the strategic defence initiative. I do not disagree with those who see the SDI as of potentially profound significance for stability. b. . disagree with those who see it as an initiative of the United States alone. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) pointed out, the Soviet Union was first in the field with an SDI research programme, which dates back to the 1960s and which has included extensive research into technologies directly relevant to ballistic missile defence including high-energy lasers, particle beams and heavy lift capability.

Moreover, the Soviet Union has already gone far further down the track of ballistic missile defence than has the United States in terms of actual deployment. The Soviet Union has the only deployed ABM missile field — that around Moscow — to which it is, of course, entitled under the ABM treaty. The Soviet Union has the only deployed operational anti-satellite system.

The Soviet SDI programme, about which we have heard little or nothing in the speeches of Labour Members, is well described in the latest edition of "Soviet Military Power," a copy of which is in the Library and the assessment in which, in this area, we broadly agree.

In view of the high dependence of the entire nuclear deterrence posture of the West on ballistic missile systems, both land and sea-launched, it would be risky in the extreme to turn a blind eye to the extensive ballistic missile defence research programme being undertaken in the Soviet Union and not to develop an equivalent research programme in the West.

I am glad to note that the Select Committee takes the same view. I also endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Sir F. Bennett) said about the contribution that the American SDI research decision has made to getting comprehensive arms control negotiations at Geneva under way.

I come to the question of the adequacy of the public expenditure provision for defence in the years ahead, a subject which many hon. Members have raised. My right hon. Friend dealt with this yesterday. While I do not want to duplicate what he said, I wish to make three specific points.

First, we are, happily, not starting from the baseline of defence expenditure that the Labour party promised to introduce at the last election, a baseline of cutting the United Kingdom's defence expenditure to the same proportion of resources as the other major European countries.

If that policy were followed today, it would mean that Britain's defence budget this year would not be £18 billion but £12 billion, a cut of £6 billion, which would be achievable only by the total decimation of our conventional equipment programme. Happily, thanks to this Government's policies, we look ahead with defence expenditure lifted on to a vastly higher plateau than it was in 1979.

Some will say, "Yes, that's all very well, but you now have Trident which we didn't have in 1979." To them, I would reply that they should compare the average annual expenditure on Trident during its procurement period which on present figures can be put at some £500 million a year, with the real increase in the size of the defence budget this year compared to 1978-79, which is some £3,000 million—some six times greater than the average annual cost of Trident. I can only say that if Labour Members want to claim that the provision for defence expenditure today is out of line with our defence commitments, then they had better acknowledge it must have been monumentally out of line in 1979.

My second point is that the level of expenditure on our conventional forces is of a quite different order of magnitude today compared to what it was six years ago. I have just said that defence spending this year will be some £3,000 million higher in real terms than when we came into office. The House may be interested to know that it breaks down into approximately £600 million more for the Army, £1,100 million for the Navy, and £1,300 million for the RAF. Most of those sums represent increased expenditure on our conventional forces, and they are very big annual figures indeed.

My last point on defence expenditure is that it must be stressed that we are one nation in a 16 nation alliance—an alliance in which the burden of defence is shared by all and in which all are expected to pull their weight.

There is no doubt about Britain pulling her weight. Of the major European members of NATO, we have the highest proportion of our GDP going to defence. We have the highest defence expenditure per head, despite being well down the European league table of GDP per head. Other NATO members undoubtedly could do more, but on the figures that I have given there are no reasonable grounds at all for saying that Britain is not taking a full and fair share of Alliance defence expenditure.

[Mr. Stanley]

The single most important decision in Britain's defence policy is whether we should continue to have our own independent nuclear deterrent. Yesterday, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said that he hoped that we would not be left with the alternatives of having Trident or no deterrent at all. The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) echoed that point today. I am sorry to disappoint them, but those are indeed the only sensible alternatives—Trident or no deterrent.

The other choices that the right hon. Member for Devonport tossed around yesterday make neither military nor financial sense to Britain. The right hon. Gentleman suggested replacing Polaris with another version of Polaris. That would be nonsense. The Polaris production line has been shut for over 15 years. It would cost a fortune to recreate it, and as the 1980 Open Government Document said in dismissing this option in paragraph 47:

"Missile system costs could well be twice those of Trident, for a smaller and less assured capability".

The right hon. Member for Devonport then suggested going into partnership with the French on their M5 missile. I can only say that there are no grounds for thinking that such a partnership would produce a cheaper deterrent for Britain, or one as effective as Trident.

The right hon. Gentleman then returned to his old hobby-horse of a sea-launched cruise missile deterrent. His argument that we should choose this option for our deterrent because the Americans are deploying sea-launched cruise missiles ignores the fundamental point that the Americans can afford both a primary ballistic and a secondary cruise deterrent at sea. We cannot. We have only one option.

We have to choose the most cost-effective system and for the reasons that I spelt out in detail in the Navy debate on 29 November, the most cost-effective option is unquestionably a submarine-launched ballistic missile. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) rightly said today, "It would be a criminal waste of money if we were to invest in a second rate deterrent that would not deter."

For Britain to base her strategic deterrent on cruise missiles would mean both a more expensive deterrent and a less certain one. It would require many more missiles, and submarines, and it would be more vulnerable. *The Sunday Times*, in much the most detailed and dispassionate analysis of the deterrent options carried out by any newspaper in this Parliament, came to this conclusion:

"Britain's deterrent needs to be credible in the Kremlin's eyes and that means it must be invulnerable. Cruise carries too many risks to be certain of deterring the Soviet Union in a crisis. We conclude that Britain made the right choice in opting for Trident and that we can afford it".

The right hon. Member for Devonport has a fairly awkward choice to make about where he stands on the future of Britain's deterrent. Either he can continue to be nearly a lone voice advocating a non-credible deterrent that clearly is a bad buy, or he can join the Liberal one-sided disarmers on the Benches behind him. Or perhaps he will do the sensible thing and agree with the Conservative party that Trident is the only answer if we are to have a nuclear deterrent.

As for the cost of Trident, there are those who have expressed the view that we cannot afford it, but our view most certainly is that we can afford it. By way of perspective, it is worth pointing out that the average amount per year that we shall be spending on buying Trident is no more than the amount that we spend each year upon research and development just for military aircraft, it is only half as much as we spend each year on training, it is only a third as much as we spend each year on the British Army of the Rhine and it is only one sixth as much as we spend each year on service pay and allowances. We believe that Trident is affordable and that it makes good sense for this country to have it.

The essence of the defence case for Britain maintaining her deterrent is the same today when it is rejected by the Opposition parties as it was in the 1960s and 1970s when they accepted it. Trident adds significantly to deterrence overall by resting NATO's deterrence on more than a single national source. For that reason, NATO supports us in maintaining the credibility of our strategic nuclear deterrent. Trident will give an increase in deterrence vastly greater than can be obtained by any other method of spending the same sum on conventional weapons, and Trident represents an ultimate insurance for Britain against nuclear blackmail.

In election after election the British people have consistently shown that they favour the maintenance of Britain's nuclear deterrent, and we are in no doubt that their judgment is right.

I now want to turn to another extremely important subject that has been raised on a number of occasions during the debate, namely, the future of American nuclear bases in Britain. The Leader of the Opposition in a recent television interview reportedly said that under a Labour Government the removal of American nuclear bases from Britain would take place.

"Within a year, and certainly not much longer."

The avowed intention of the Labour party, repeated by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) again yesterday, to boot the Americans out of their nuclear bases in this country is profoundly short-sighted and, if carried out, would be profoundly damaging. Militarily it makes no sense at all. When my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed), in an acute intervention yesterday, asked the right hon. Member for Llanelli whether he accepted the need against Soviet submarines for the nuclear depth charges provided by the Americans and operated from this country, the right hon. Gentleman had no answer whatsoever to offer.—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, I agree, thought up an answer overnight. He came to the conclusion that American nuclear depth charges are militarily useless. I can only say to him that the entire Labour Government, from 1974 to 1979, took a totally different view.

I hope that the Labour party is not under the illusion that the repercussions of telling the Americans to go home would be limited just to Britain. They would not be. The repercussions would be felt across the European NATO countries, they would be felt across the Atlantic, and they would be felt not least on Capitol Hill. In Europe, if a British Government sent the Americans packing certain other Governments in NATO countries would undoubtedly come under pressure to follow suit.

Across the Atlantic, the reaction in Congress to American eviction from Britain is not difficult to predict. It would be to say, "Well, if you don't want us in Europe, you needn't have us, and we will start thinning out our European conventional forces as well as the nuclear ones

that you don't want, and save our valuable foreign exchange". It is certain that that would be the reaction. Therefore, this particular Labour policy could well result in setting in motion a chain of events leading to a substantial reduction of the American presence in Europe —a presence which has been a key element in the successful maintenance of deterrence in the post-war period. That is why that piece of Labour party policy is profoundly irresponsible. But it is not only profoundly irresponsible; it is also glaringly inconsistent.

The Labour party professes itself to be committed to NATO, and the Opposition spokesman repeated that commitment at the end of his speech. As a member of NATO our own country, like every other NATO country, automatically enjoys and willingly accepts the protection of the American nuclear umbrella that is provided by American nuclear weapons based outside Europe and within Europe. For that reason, every British Government, since 1948, including every post-war Labour Government, have willingly accepted the basing of American nuclear-capable aircraft in Britain. They have also, since 1960, willingly accepted the basing of American nuclear missile-firing submarines in British waters.

If we accept the benefits of NATO, including American nuclear protection, it is weak, faint-hearted and morally indefensible to say that we want the protection of American nuclear weapons provided that they are based in somebody else's country. The policy of serving notice to quit on the American nuclear bases in Britain is a policy without either defence responsibility or moral justification.

The Government have carried through a major improvement in defence over the past six years. While most other expenditure programmes have nad to be reduced, expenditure on defence has been increased by approximately one fifth in real terms—a very substantial uplift. I am sure that no other Government, of whatever political complexion, would have given such a degree of priority to defence expenditure over the past six years as this one. That priority is very necessary against the rate of improvement in Warsaw pact capabilities, which shows no sign whatever of slowing down.

Our uplift in defence expenditure has enabled us to restore pay comparability for the Armed Forces and to halve the record rate of premature voluntary exits that we found on coming into office. It is enabling us to carry through a massive and comprehensive re-equipment and modernisation programme of our conventional forces in all three services. It is enabling us to bring about a much needed expansion of our reserves and territorials. It is enabling us to build up war stocks and to make improvements in sustainability, to which the Warsaw pact has been devoting huge resources in recent years.

We have not just been in the business of spending more money. We are equally in the business of getting better value for money and greater efficiency wherever we can. My right hon. Friend's radical reorganisation of the Department is without question a major improvement and a major success. The drive for still more efficent use of service manpower is being carried through in all three services, and with the striking result already achieved by the Army. The drive for more competition is already showing some significant cost savings, and more savings will undoubtedly follow.

The Government have properly discharged their fundamental responsibility to maintain the peace with freedom that we have enjoyed in Europe these past 40 years, and we shall continue to discharge that responsibility.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 157, Noes 367.

Division No. 237] **[10 pm**

AYES

Anderson, Donald	Hardy, Peter
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Harman, Ms Harriet
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Haynes, Frank
Barron, Kevin	Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Heffer, Eric S.
Bell, Stuart	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Home Robertson, John
Bidwell, Sydney	Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Blair, Anthony	Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Boyes, Roland	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*	Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Janner, Hon Greville
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	John, Brynmor
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*	Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Buchan, Norman	Lamond, James
Caborn, Richard	Leadbitter, Ted
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	Leighton, Ronald
Campbell, Ian	Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Canavan, Dennis	Litherland, Robert
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Clarke, Thomas	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Clay, Robert	McCartney, Hugh
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*	McKelvey, William
Cohen, Harry	MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Coleman, Donald	McNamara, Kevin
Conlan, Bernard	McTaggart, Robert
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*	Madden, Max
Corbett, Robin	Marek, Dr John
Corbyn, Jeremy	Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Cowans, Harry	Martin, Michael
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*	Maxton, John
Craigen, J. M.	Meacher, Michael
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Mikardo, Ian
Cunningham, Dr John	Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Dalyell, Tam	Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*	Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*	Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Deakins, Eric	Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Dewar, Donald	Nellist, David
Dixon, Donald	O'Brien, William
Dobson, Frank	O'Neill, Martin
Dormand, Jack	Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Douglas, Dick	Park, George
Dubs, Alfred	Parry, Robert
Duffy, A. E. P.	Patchett, Terry
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.	Pike, Peter
Eastham, Ken	Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*	Randall, Stuart
Ewing, Harry	Redmond, M.
Fatchett, Derek	Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Faulds, Andrew	Richardson, Ms Jo
Fisher, Mark	Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Flannery, Martin	Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael	Sedgemore, Brian
Forrester, John	Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Foster, Derek	Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Foulkes, George	Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*	Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Garrett, W. E.	Skinner, Dennis
George, Bruce	Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Golding, John	Snape, Peter
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*	Soley, Clive
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*	Spearing, Nigel

Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Freud, Clement
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Edward
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger

Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Ian Lang.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I must ask for your clarification in case there has been a mistake I find it quite extraordinary that the Opposition should vote against the Defence Estimates—they do not usually do so—because it means that they are voting against the defence of the realm. If they won, we should have no money to pay the Army, the Navy or the Air Force and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that is a speech that the hon. Gentleman might have made if he had been called. How people vote in this place is not a matter for me.

The House having divided: Ayes 353, Noes 168.

Division No. 238] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, E. *(B'y St Edm'ds)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Gregory *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas

McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, J.
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Ian Lang.

NOES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cowans, Harry
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Golding, John
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Russell
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.

Skinner, Dennis	Wallace, James
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Snape, Peter	Weetch, Ken
Soley, Clive	White, James
Spearing, Nigel	Williams, Rt Hon A.
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*	Winnick, David
Stott, Roger	Woodall, Alec
Strang, Gavin	Wrigglesworth, Ian
Straw, Jack	Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*	
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*	Tellers for the Noes:
Tinn, James	Mr. John McWilliam and
Torney, Tom	Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985, contained in Cmnd. 9430.

CHILD ABDUCTION AND CUSTODY BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 69 (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

CHILD ABDUCTION AND CUSTODY BILL *[LORDS]* [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Child Abduction and Custody Bill, *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenses incurred by the Lord Chancellor or the Secretary of State by virtue of the said Act; and

(b) any increase attributable to the said Act in the sums so payable under any other Act.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

Betting, Gaming and Lotteries

That the draft Pool Competitions Act 1971 (Continuance) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 20th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Question agreed to.

ENERGY

Ordered,

That Mr. Robert Hayward be discharged from the Energy Committee and Mr. Michael Portillo be added.—*[Mr. Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That, in the course of its consideration of Scottish Estimates, the Scottish Grand Committee may meet in Edinburgh on Monday 8th July at half-past Ten o'clock. — *[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

War Pensioners

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

10.28 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of the problems facing war pensioners. I am particularly grateful to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for being here to answer the debate after what I know has been a demanding week for him. I took up some of his time this afternoon when he saw a deputation from Southend.

One thing on which we are all united is the sentiment that we owe a huge debt to the millions of Britons and members of the Commonwealth forces who fought for the preservation of our freedom. We owe a particular debt to those who were injured in the conflict, and to the widows and families of those who lost their lives. In times of peace, we have a special obligation to those who sustain injury or illness in the continuing battle to preserve the peace through service in the armed forces. Although I appreciate that Governments of both parties have consistently claimed to give a high priority to this basic duty and obligation, I believe that the time has come for a comprehensive review of our procedures and policies, and tonight I shall make several suggestions which I hope will be considered by the Minister as a matter of urgency.

The first proposal is that much more must be done to inform ex-service men of their entitlement to pensions and to give them advice on how claims can be submitted and considered. Many ex-service men have developed illnesses and disabilities stemming from their war service many years ago, but they are unaware that they have the right to apply, even after the lapse of time involved. This may appear to be an unusual proposition, but I know of several cases in my constituency where ex-service men were prompted to apply, and obtained the pensions to which they were entitled, simply because individuals with specialist knowledge went out of their way to give advice.

In that connection, the Minister will be aware of the outstanding campaigning and sheer hard work carried out by many interested people throughout the country, and of the endeavours in the Southend area of Mr. Holtham of the Far East Prisoners of War Association, and Mr. Micky Strauss, who, as a disabled ex-service man, has devoted much of his life to his former comrades-in-arms.

My argument is that this is not an area that we should leave to the dedicated work of individuals, because, inevitably, some will slip through the voluntary net. There is an urgent need for the Department to initiate a publicity campaign to advise ex-service men of their rights and to provide convenient and suitably qualified facilities to give advice on the claims mechanism. The least that I would ask is that pamphlets be displayed in post offices and in other public offices, and that some newspaper advertisements be submitted for publication in the national press.

My second proposal is that there is an urgent need for steps to be taken to speed the processes of dealing with claims. Many of the claimants are aged 70 years or more, and it seems outrageous that months pass before decisions are made. There are also long delays in the appeals procedure. I appreciate that medical issues cannot be decided within 24 hours, but I hope that the Minister will

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

be aware of the resentment that exists over the long delays — especially in the assessment of claims relating to tropical diseases.

The third issue on which I would appreciate advice is the onus of proof. Of course, it is no easy task to make a decision on the relevance of disabilities and illnesses stemming from military service years ago, and to isolate that factor, but when we consider the contribution that has been made by ex-service men, there is a need for more flexibility and humanity to be shown.

My fourth suggestion relates to what I consider to be an unjust anomaly for those whose pension entitlement stems from service before and after 1973. My understanding is that a private soldier who left the services with a 100 per cent. war disablement before 1973 receives £58·40 a week, which seems extremely low. However, I understand that those who left the forces with 100 per cent. disablement after 1973 receive £86·60 a week. Likewise, pre-1973 war widows receive £46·55 a week, while those whose husbands were killed after 1973 receive £95·43 a week. There should be no differentiation between ex-service people who suffer from the same disability, or widows who have lost their husbands serving their country, because of the time of disablement or death. Surely one man's arm or leg is as valuable as another's, and one widow's husband was as dear as the next's. Is there any prospect of removing what seems to be an absurd anomaly?

Another strange anomaly relates to the distinction made between payments to war widows of officers and those of other ranks on remarriage or on the death of the second husband. Perhaps the Minister would also comment on that.

My final point relates to the size and scale of service pensions. Of course, I am aware of the enormous problems facing all Governments in the area of public spending, but there can be no greater priority than the care and welfare of those who abandoned their homes and loved ones to secure the preservation of our freedom and way of life. The information that I have shows that Britain does not excel in the league table of pension provision for ex-service men among the nations of the free world. Does my hon. Friend agree with that on the basis of the information available to him?

May we have my hon. Friend's firm pledge that he will fight to ensure that the highest possible priority is given to our war pensioners and war widows, to whom we owe the kind of debt which cannot be quantified in cash? That debt demands the provision of substantial and continuing resources to deal with their problems.

I am grateful for having had the opportunity to put my points, and I thank my hon. Friend for the attention that he has paid to what I have said.

10.34 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am greatful to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) for initiating this debate about war pensioners. He was kind enough to give me a detailed idea of the points he intended to raise and that will enable me to give him a detailed reply.

My hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) recently initiated a similar debate about war widows, and in this year, which marks the 40th anniversary of the ending of the second world war, it is appropriate that we should remind ourselves of the debt that we owe to those who were disabled or bereaved in the service of this country. We all understand that nothing can fully compensate those who have been seriously disabled as a result of service in the armed forces, but the special circumstances of their disablement are recognised in the preferential provisions made for them under the war pensions scheme administered by my Department. There are still about 225,000 war disabled pensioners. I should like to give the House some details of the benefits that those pensioners receive under the war pensions scheme.

The rate of war disablement pension depends on the degree of disablement. A pensioner whose disablement is assessed at 100 per cent. receives a basic pension of £58·40 a week. There are proportionately lower rates for lower degrees of disablement, down to £11·68 a week for a pensioner whose disablement is assessed at 20 per cent. Awards for disablement of less than 20 per cent. take the form of a lump sum gratuity. In addition to the basic war disablement pension, there is a range of additional, supplementary allowances which are paid as part of the weekly pension. They are, in the main, designed to provide extra help for the more seriously disabled. My hon. Friend will be aware of some of the details of those special allowances.

A severely disabled war pensioner with maximum allowances can receive a total pension in the region of £200 a week and, moreover, that sum will be entirely free of income tax. I am quoting these figures not in any boastful way, because, as I have said, no amount of money can compensate someone for such grievous disablement, but to show hon. Members that the war pensions scheme seeks to ensure, as far as it can, that financial worries of war pensioners are reduced to the minimum.

It is important to make it clear that the proposals for the reform of social security in the Green Paper recently published by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State do not relate to war pensions and allowances. The war pensions scheme was specifically excluded from the scope of the social security review. In consultation with the ex-service organisations, we shall be looking separately at any implications that the proposed changes may have for war pensioners and war widows.

It has long been the policy of Governments of all complexions that war pensioners should be accorded preferential treatment. Indeed, that preference has been progressively extended over the years as additional pensions have been introduced into the war pensions scheme. As recently as 1983, we introduced the new war pensioners mobility supplement for pensioners with serious walking difficulties occasioned by their war disablement. The supplement is paid at a preferentially higher rate than the national insurance mobility allowance and, unlike mobility allowance, has no age restriction. Nearly 11,000 pensioners have benefited so far from the new supplement.

Adequate financial provision for the war disabled is most important, but the Government's responsibility does not end there. Any war pensioner who needs treatment for his war disablement is given priority treatment within the National Health Service, subject only to emergency and other very urgent cases. If the necessary treatment is not available under the NHS, the DHSS can approve and pay

for private treatment. Treatment may also be arranged in hospitals with special facilities for war pensioners and, in some circumstances, in service hospitals. All medicines prescribed under the NHS for a pensioner's war disablement are free of charge, and any aid or appliance is also provided free of charge.

The DHSS also runs a special war pensioners' welfare service which provides help and advice for war pensioners on any problems which they may have. Through a nationwide network of specially trained welfare officers, help is given with pensions, allowances and more personal matters, such as work and housing. The service is available on call from pensioners, and it also takes the initiative in visiting the more severely disabled war pensioners, for whom regular personal visits can be arranged either from welfare officers or voluntary visitors. The welfare service also runs a national homecrafts scheme, through which the Department's handicraft instructors can assist pensioners to take up a wide range of crafts.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): We are grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) for raising this difficult issue. Will my hon. Friend the Minister consider getting his Department to publish a small work outlining what he is saying now? It is vastly complicated, and many of us would like something like a child's guide which draws together all the strands, including war pensioners from the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Whitney: I entirely accept my hon. and learned Friend's point, and in response to our hon. Friend I shall shortly deal with publicity.

At this stage, I should like to pay a warm tribute to the enormous contribution made by the voluntary sector in safeguarding the interests and well-being of war pensioners. My hon. Friend has already mentioned the work of the Far Eastern Prisoners of War Association in his constituency. It is not possible to praise too highly the valuable part played by this and many other organisations. I speak as someone who has for many years been a proud member of the Royal British Legion. We all know of the contributions that it makes. The success of a partnership between the public and private sectors with common aims and interests is surely seen to no better effect than in the area of war pensions and war pensioners.

Both my hon. Friend and my hon. and learned Friend raised the question of publicity. My hon. Friend pointed to the possibility that there may be former members of the armed forces who do not begin to suffer from the effects of injuries or diseases arising from their service until many years later and may not then realise that they can still claim a pension. We recognise the need for publicity. Information about war pensions is already included in literature issued to all service personnel on discharge. It explains to them about the availability of pensions, and how to make a claim if, either then or at any future date, they suffer from a disability caused or made worse by their service. Leaflets about war pensions are also available at DHSS offices and from ex-service and other voluntary organisations.

While I take my hon. Friend's point, there is already a considerable level of awareness of the war pensions scheme among service and ex-service personnel. In 1984, for example, we received significantly more than 4,000 new claims in respect of service after 2 September 1939, and 38 claims from ex-service men from the great war.

Nevertheless, I accept that we could do even more—as my right hon. and hon. Friends have pressed me to do—to publicise the availability of war pensions. The House will be glad to know that we are preparing a new leaflet aimed specifically at ex-service personnel. It will outline the allowances available under the war pensions scheme, explain who may be eligible and make it clear that "war pensions" are not necessarily restricted to people who served in war time but can be paid in respect of any disablement due to service after 2 September 1939. The distribution arrangements for the new leaflet have still to be finalised, but we shall take into account the points made by my hon. Friends about the need for improved publicity.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: That is splendid news and I am delighted with what the Minister has said. Will he, in the review, consider the possibility of the pamphlets being made available in post offices?

Mr. Whitney: I shall give careful consideration to that point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East referred to the problem of deciding claims for war pensions. As he will appreciate, this can be a complicated business, particularly when it may be necessary to look back over a period of 40 years or more. Like my hon. Friend, I know well from experience in my constituency what problems can arise in individual cases.

It is true that recently the time taken to decide war pensions claims has been even longer than usual due to staffing difficulties in the medical sections of the Department. I am pleased to say, however, that there has been an improvement in recent months. The number of claims awaiting medical decision is less than half what it was six months ago and there are now no delays in priority cases, claims from ex-far eastern prisoners of war and claims for supplementary allowances.

My hon. Friend raised the question of the onus of proof in deciding claims for war pension, a subject which is put to us from time to time. If pension is claimed within seven years of the man leaving the Services, his claim automatically succeeds, unless the Department can show that the disablement for which he is claiming is not due to service. The onus of proof in these cases is placed squarely on the Department. Where a claim is made more than seven years after the end of service, the onus shifts to the claimant. But the law requires that the claimant shall be given the benefit of any reasonable doubt.

If the claimant is dissatisfied with the Department's decision, he usually has a right of appeal to the independent pensions appeal tribunal. Hon. Members will agree that the terms under which claims are decided are very favourable, particularly when it is recalled that there is effectively no time limit on claiming a war pension.

I recognise the force of what my hon. Friend said about the pensions payable to war pensioners and war widows from before 1973. I should stress that the pensions payable under the war pensions scheme administered by my Department are made on the same basis, irrespective of the date of service. The disparity to which my hon. Friend refers arises from the improved pensions payable since 1973 under the occupational pension scheme for the armed forces administered by the Ministry of Defence in its capacity as the service man's employer.

The cost alone of making restrospective the 1973 improvements in that scheme is prohibitive—about £600

[Mr. Whitney]

million a year in current terms. I am sure that hon. Members will agree that to have failed to make those improvements because they could not be made restrospective would not have been in the best interests of current and future service men and their families.

My hon. Friend mentioned an anomaly in the rules governing the payment of war widow's pension to widows who remarry and then are widowed a second time. The widow of an officer does not receive a gratuity on her remarriage, but if her second husband dies and she can show that she is in financial need her war widow's pension can be reinstated. These provisions date back more than 60 years and the reasons behind them are largely historical. I have previously debated this subject with my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth, and I take note of my hon. Friend's comments on the issue.

Finally, my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East raised the question of how we treat our war pensioners compared with other countries. First, let me say that comparisons between one country's provisions and another's are not easy to make. I am sure that my hon. Friend recognises that. Regard would need to be had not only to the rates of pensions and allowances themselves and the cost of living in those countries but to such things as the conditions for entitlement under respective schemes and whether pensions were taxable or means-tested in any way. One needs to have regard also to the non-cash provision, such as priority treatment and the war pensioners' welfare service, which I have mentioned, and to other, more general provisions, like arrangements in the National Health Service and social services.

All in all, I think that our provisions for war pensioners generally compare favourably with those of other countries. What matters, surely, is not what other countries do for their war pensioners but what this country does for its war disabled; and on that our record is good.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for having raised this matter, and I am glad of this opportunity to assure him and other hon. Members of the Government's continuing commitment to the cause of war pensioners and war widows.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 14 June 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Wakefield Prison

9.34 am

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I beg to ask leave to present a petition sent by Mr. Steven Alfred Wilkins, a former constituent of mine, at present in prison in Wakefield prison. It begins:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of Steven Alfred Wilkins sheweth——

and I should like to read extracts from this long petition. Mr. Wilkins is serving a life sentence. He has spent four years at Parkhurst prison and was then transferred to Wakefield prison. He finds the regime at Wakefield prison unacceptable. He says:

I find Wakefield prison as oppressive and provocative.

I feel I am no longer treated as a person but as a prisoner and the quality of life here is such that any unlawful disturbance is welcome in order to break the monotony and create excitement which is suppressed by the strict system here . . .

The two opposing systems of Parkhurst and Wakefield achieve different results and create opposite attitudes . . . For example in Parkhurst category 'A' prisoners move to various activities and functions within the prison along with the non-category 'A' prisoners and are allowed the same freedom of movement within the security of the prison as the other inmates.

In Wakefield, category 'A' prisoners are escorted as a separate group to all activities such as exercise, workshops, canteen, medicine hatch and other functions. This may sound justifiable from a security standpoint but the effects of this constant supervision are adverse.

Parkhurst and other long term prisons have shown that such strict supervision is not necessary to maintain security and like other inmates I myself recognise such and it is resented and contributed to a derisory attitude.

He says that recreation at Wakefield is extremely limited because the governor refuses to leave cell doors open throughout the recreation period which consists of only TV, snooker or board games . . .

The mental and sociological consequences of this restriction are these; prisoners in such a false and unnatural environment need to maintain during years in prison as near as possible a sense of normalcy in order to stave off institutionalisation and a degenerating of social skills and accepted social standards.

The restricting of social interaction to TV, snooker and board games is not conducive to the mental and social well being of inmates.

Not only do inmates need a period of solace away from the ever present observation of staff in order to socialise together in a relaxed manner but need also to maintain their identity.

There exists here in Wakefield as in other long term prisons a large compound containing a football pitch, volley ball court and ample room for jogging or just walking, but yet again unlike other long term prisons exercise during the weekdays here at Wakefield is restricted to a small yard measuring 83 paces——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is giving us a great deal of detail, but this is a petition, not a speech.

Mr. Mitchell: It is a rather long petition, Mr. Speaker. I wish to conclude the extract and present the petition. I am reading only extracts.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not the procedure for petitions. It sounds as if the hon. Gentleman is making an Adjournment debate speech.

Mr. Mitchell: I should like to conclude the extract. He says:

we see it as unnecessary oppression because we know it does not happen in other long term prisons.

All this is seen as insecurity on the part of the authority.

He talks of Wakefield being aggravating, provocative, apathetic and aggressive. It produces people who become resentful, rebellious, disrespectful and everything a convict is supposed to be. He finishes:

your petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray, that the adverse aspects of the system here at Wakefield prison will be rectified in the interests of law and order for the benefit of both, offenders and society.

To lie upon the Table.

BILL PRESENTED

EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (FINANCE)

Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, supported by Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Michael Jopling, Mr. Peter Rees, Mr. Malcolm Rifkind, Mr. John Moore, Mr. Barney Hayhoe and Mr. Ian Stewart, presented (under Standing Order No. 111 (Procedure upon Bills whose main object is to create a charge upon the public revenue)) a Bill to amend the definition of 'the Treaties' and 'the Community Treaties' in section 1(2) of the European Communities Act 1972 so as to include the decision, of 7 May 1985, of the Council of the Communities on the Communities' system of own resources and the undertaking made by the Representatives of the Governments of the member States, meeting within the Council of 23 and 24 April 1985 in Brussels, to make payments to finance the Communities' general budget for the financial year 1985: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Monday 17 June and to be printed. [Bill 158.]

9.40 am

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may recall that during the autumn there was a case in the High Court and an appeal—I refer to the case of Smedley *v.* the Crown—which had an impact on the procedures and powers of the House. This Bill seeks to define retrospectively two agreements made on 7 May, and on 23 and 24 April. I give you notice, Mr. Speaker, that I may wish to raise the question of the Bill's influence and effect on last autumn's proceedings.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice, but the presentation of a Bill is a formal procedure, giving authority for the Bill to be printed. Doubtless we shall all know what it contains once it has been printed.

Government's Policy for Science

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

9.41 am

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): Today I shall concentrate on the utilitarian aspects of civil science. However, I first recognise and pay tribute to the noble function of scientific research in expanding our understanding of the world in which we live and, indeed, our understanding of the universe. I also realise the excitement, slog, frustration and satisfaction that those who devote their lives to scientific research face.

The Government spend about £2 billion a year on civil scientific research and development, ranging from pure or fundamental science at one end of the spectrum to the most applied work—for example, product development—at the other. I am responsible for about half of that expenditure — rather more than £1 billion — which supports research and the related training of highly qualified manpower in the universities, the polytechnics, in other institutions of higher education and in and through the five research councils.

This system is known as the nation's science base: it provides our national research capability and trains the highly qualified manpower essential for our increasingly science-based society.

In parallel with that, and interacting with the science base, the Government spend as much again—about £1 billion—on applied civil research, as set out in table 2.1 of the annual review of Government-funded research and development for 1984, which is directed to solving specific practical problems or to supporting the development of specific policies. About one tenth of this research is contracted out to research council establishments, and additionally some is commissioned direct from universities and polytechnics. In addition to all that taxpayers' money for civil research, huge sums are devoted by business to civil research, and there are significant additional resources which are given by charities, most of which are medicine-oriented.

In 1971 Lord Rothschild drew a distinction between applied research for which, by definition in his analysis, there had to be a non-scientist customer, and basic research where he acknowledged the choice of lines of research had to be left to scientists. Lord Rothschild's review led of course to the transfer of control for some applied work—and the money that went with it—from the research councils to Government Departments which stand as customers or proxy customers for this work under the post-Rothschild arrangements.

Lord Rothschild recognised, however, that there was a grey area between basic and applied work, which he called "general" research: this is research with clear potentioal for wide-ranging applications in industry, medicine, and so on, but where it is too early in the development of the work for specific applications and products to have been clearly specified. Lord Rothschild left responsibility for this kind of research to the research councils. These days it is usually called "strategic" research. Some 40 per cent. of the research supported by the research councils is strategic research; a further 20 per cent. is applied; the remaining 40 per cent. is basic pure research as conventionally understood.

I mentioned those statistics to counter the impression which seems to have gained ground in some quarters since Lord Rothschild's report that civil science in the universities and the research councils, because it is largely not applied research or development, is somehow irrelevant to and remote from the practical world. No one reading the latest advice to me from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils entitled "Science and Public Expenditure" published yesterday could labour under that impression for long. In its advice the board points to many examples of strategic work being undertaken by the research councils, in many cases in collaboration with industry, which is clearly of the greatest potential importance for the British economy.

I shall pick out a few examples: the work of the Science and Engineering Research Council on chemical sensors, the development of which could revolutionise the monitoring and controlling of industrial processes; and on low-dimensional structures, precisely tailored materials with novel properties and with a wide range of potential industrial applications; the Natural Environment Research Council's deep geology programme, relevant to the location and extraction of the United Kingdom's natural resources; the Medical Research Council's pioneering work in clinical molecular biology which could revolutionise medical practice; and the Agricultural and Food Research Council's expanding food research programe which is exploiting advances in molecular biology, biochemistry and biophysics to improve our understanding and control of micro-organisms.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Secretary of State undertake to look at the proposed dispersal of the national yeast culture collection? I do not expect an answer from him in the middle of his speech, but, as it is a serious matter, will he consider it?

Sir Keith Joseph: I shall certainly inform myself, and write to the hon. Gentleman. However, the research councils are treated as autonomous bodies that make their own decisions as to how to spend the taxpayers' money which I, under advice, distribute to them. Subject to that, I shall look into the matter and write to the hon. Gentleman.

One of the themes which the Advisory Board for the Research Councils develops in its recent advice to me is the close interdependence of strategic and applied research; and of basic and strategic research. Although it is convenient for some purposes to define research using these terms, we must not forget that the different kinds of research feed off each other; that progress in applied and strategic research depends on advances in fundamental understanding in the related basic sciences. The advisory board advises caution in the use of the strategic and basic labels because it suggests erroneously that

> "a clear boundary can be drawn between relevant and curiosity-orientated research."

But, as the board goes on to say in its report:

> "Most branches of physics and chemistry are of strategic importance in relation to the engineering and chemical industries; and almost all fields of biology from molecular genetics to mathematical ecology are potential contributors to medicine, agriculture, food processing and environmental management. Science is now so pervasive and the application so widespread that most basic science is relevant to the practical needs of society."

More than ever in the past, scientific research is now the essential basis for industrial innovation. As the

advisory board argues cogently in its report, technological innovation in our traditional industries and the development of new high technology industries is essential if we are to maintain and, moreover, improve our prosperity. It might be argued — and I believe some people have argued—that the urgent priority for national energies and expenditure is industrial innovation and that scientific research should in the meantime take a back seat. But industrial innovation without an underpinning research capability is not a realistic option. As the advisory board says in its report, the pace and sophistication of scientific and technological advance is now such that to introduce the technology, one needs trained people, including active researchers in the corresponding basic science. Additionally, it may in future become more difficult to borrow technology developed overseas, because the increasing awareness of scientists and industry the world over of the commercial potential of research seems likely to inhibit the free circulation, to which we have become used, of the results of scientific endeavour.

Therefore, I view with some concern reports that increasing numbers of our brightest scientists are leaving this country, perhaps for good, to take up research appointments overseas. I stress that the healthy interchange of scientific skills across the world is entirely to be desired. What is not so healthy is if it tends to be a one-way traffic. The impression is that the loss of our brightest scientists is not being balanced either by the return of British scientists or by immigration into Britain of overseas scientists. In other words, there is a net brain drain.

That opinion has not been reached on firm evidence. The advisory board is conducting a quick survey of university research groups to collect hard information about the net brain drain, and it hopes to give me its results at the end of August.

It is not sufficient for the Government to invest money in civil science——

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Bearing in mind his remarks, does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be in order and a good idea for the Government to consider encouraging repatriation of British scientists to this country?

Sir Keith Joseph: I well remember that in the 1950s we asked a civil servant—I cannot remember his name; I think it was C. P. Snow, was it not?

Dame Judith Hart (Clydesdale): It was C. P. Snow and Mr. Harry Hoff.

Sir Keith Joseph: Indeed it was. We asked them to try to persuade British scientists to return, and that had some success. I do not know whether the current position demands similar action or how effective it would be. However, I note my hon. Friend's comments.

It is well known that this country's track record in exploiting the commercial potential of our scientists' inventions has been poor. A number of factors are essential for successful exploitation. First, there must be a climate —almost a culture—within our society that encourages enterprise. There must be a receptive attitude by industry, embodying enterprise; there must be availability of risk capital; there must be links between academic researchers and industry; and there must be awareness by academic researchers of the commercial potential of their work.

Great strides have been made in recent years in building bridges between academic research and business. A considerable amount of the credit here must go to the research councils which have developed collaborative programmes of research with industry, commerce and business.

For example, since 1977, the Science and Engineering Research Council has established special programmes with industry in areas of technology such as polymer engineering, biotechnology and the application of computers to manufacturing engineering. Its teaching company scheme, supported jointly with the Department of Trade and Industry, has been notably successful in helping to develop active partnerships between higher education institutions and manufacturing companies and encouraging able graduates to train for careers in manufacturing.

The Science and Engineering Research Council's co-operative awards in science and engineering scheme— CASE—offers a type of research studentship where an industrial organisation joins with the university in defining a project and supervising student's progress.

The Medical Research Council currently has some 100 inventions licensed or under exploitation by the British Technology Group and some 50 exploitation agreements made directly with commercial organisations. It is planning to set up a new collaborative centre for research that will offer a consultancy and advisory service for industry.

The Natural Environment Research Council works closely with British industry to secure overseas contracts, especially in the environmental consultancy and resource survey areas.

The Natural Environment Research Council's institute of oceanographic sciences has developed a device — GLORIA—which allows researchers for the first time to survey the ocean floor—vital for the siting of offshore structures and the laying of submarine cables and pipelines. Shortly before Christmas, the council signed a £12 million agreement with the United States geological survey to use the device to survey the entire US coastal waters.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): The right hon. Gentleman is outlining a survey that is of very great interest. There is an emphasis on the industrial aspect— the application of science. Will he consider where that must originate? Surely it must come from our universities. Yet there is a tremendous problem in our universities because our young scientists find it difficult to obtain established posts. That is a relatively new position; it did not occur a few years ago. I am talking from personal experience because my son is a scientist. I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that, if he does not obtain a post of that description in this country within the next year or so, he will go abroad.

Sir Keith Joseph: I certainly acknowledge the problem, but to some extent it has been mitigated by the Government's new blood scheme, which has been welcomed by the universities. I note that the number of appointments that they would like to make significantly, though not dramatically, exceeds the number of vacancies that they expect during the equivalent time. I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's valid point.

I was giving some examples of the research councils' work. The Agricultural and Food Research Council has

[Sir Keith Joseph]

recently developed a sophisticated new technique for chilling meat carcases which will save the country £12 million a year in energy costs, and a new technique for controlling the amount of nitrogen fertiliser used by farmers which will save British horticulture £7 million per annum and reduce environmental pollution from excess use of nitrogen fertiliser.

Progress is also being made in increasing the links between researchers in the universities and industry, though here there is further to go. The Government, for their part, have confirmed that universities' earnings from collaboration with industry will not be penalised in the determination of allocation of University Grants Committee block grant. We have ended the British Technology Group's monopoly of first refusal on research council-funded inventions and endorsed the proposed transfer of responsibility for promoting commercial exploitation from the research councils to universities, with delegation of responsibility wherever possible to the individual researcher. We are also working with the university directors of industrial liaison and others to develop a national database of academic expertise and facilities in universities and polytechnics for use by industry.

As for industry, the Government's recent Green Paper "Development of Higher Education into the 1990s" emphasised that business should take advantage, in its own interest, of what higher education has to offer through research, technology transfer, business start-up facilities and consultancy. Firms in the United Kingdom need to be as aware—I emphasise, in their own interests—as many of their foreign competitors of the potential of our higher education institutions, particularly as vital partners in product innovation. In its recent advice to me, the Advisory Board for the Research Councils—and it is encouraging—says that it

"now see a clear trend in which more science-based industry is being promoted actively in this country. It is becoming a significant industrial sector in its own right and is also assisting in the modernisation of more traditional industries".

But there is still a considerable way to go.

I wish to acknowledge the very large research spending and excellent work of some of our big chemical, oil, pharmaceutical, aerospace, communications, electrical and electronic companies. Their contribution to our national capability is very significant. Nevertheless, British industry as a whole still seems less interested in research than industry in other countries.

One sign of changing attitudes in industry may be that the status of our engineers and scientists within industry is improving and more young people with qualifications at first degree level in engineering and science are now entering industry. Many of our largest and most successful enterprises accord high status and provide good salaries to their top engineers and scientists. However, there is still a significant number of other British companies where engineers and scientists have a lowly position compared with their counterparts in countries that are our main industrial competitors. To succeed in an international technological environment, it is important that our best engineers and scientists receive adequate rewards and incentives not only in financial terms but in terms of their involvement in shaping the strategy of their enterprise in a highly competitive world.

The potential and excitement of science are such that demands for resources for science will always outstrip what can be afforded. That is true even in the wealthiest of countries and particularly so in the United Kingdom because of our relatively poor economic performance in recent decades. None the less, the Government have given science some priority in public spending decisions. Measured against average inflation, the science vote has grown by 8 per cent. since 1979-80—hardly negligible. At a considerable cost, I found an additional £55 million for science in the research councils and universities from the last public expenditure settlement—20 per cent. less than I had originally hoped for, but still a valuable reinforcement to the science base. The extra money is being used, highly selectively, to buy new equipment in universities for some of our best research groups, to fund more top quality research projects in the research councils and to assist the Agricultural and Food Research Council and the Natural Environment Research Council in restructuring their programmes better to reflect current priorities.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I should like to believe what the Secretary of State is saying, but how can he square it with a note in one of the reference sheets from the Library, which quotes *Nature* of 26 July 1984, which states:

"By parsimony, indolence and indifference, the British Government is killing off imaginative research."?

I should like to believe what the right hon. Gentleman is saying, but it is difficult.

Sir Keith Joseph: I can best answer the hon. Gentleman by referring to the leading article in *Nature* of 13 June, in which a more balanced picture is given. It gives credit to the Government for what they have done and makes relatively constructive suggestions about what the Government should do. Therefore, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the current *Nature* leader.

Despite that recent financial reinforcement, the Advisory Board for the Research Councils is still able to make a powerful case for more money. It wants an additional £85 million for the research councils over the next three years. It accepts that the Government have honoured their pledge to protect the science budget in gross terms, but it emphasises that a small but significant fraction of public money within the science budget is not available for science because of increasing expenditure on overheads such as international subscriptions in sterling terms, the cost of redeployment and the cost of superannuation.

Two main arguments underlie the board's bid. First, the costs of undertaking science and of certain overheads, to which I have just referred, have increased faster than general inflation. Secondly, the rapid development of science and technology is opening up new research opportunities, which the research councils have difficulty responding to quickly enough within, at best, level and, in some cases, contracting budgets. The case that the advisory board makes is powerful, and I shall be considering it further with my colleagues during this year's public expenditure survey. Of course, at this stage, I cannot even guess what the outcome of those deliberations might be.

What I can do now is pay warm tribute to the way in which the research councils are responding to the challenge of reviewing and adjusting the balance of their

programmes to reflect the latest priorities. Of course I recognise the difficulties involved in making choices, in deciding to reduce support for one area in order to build up another that merits higher priority; the pain in closing down establishments and cutting jobs. But that process is necessary to secure the most effective use of resources available, by running down work that is less promising in favour of more promising work. The current redeployment in the research councils is also necessary to increase their flexibility—to reduce the proportion of their resources tied up in long-term commitments so that in future they can respond more rapidly and effectively as scientific priorities change.

The advisory board argues in its report that research in the universities, funded through the University Grants Committee, has come under pressure because of the 8 per cent. overall reduction in Government funds for universities since 1981-82, and that in consequence the well-found laboratory no longer exists. That is the board's judgment. It was because of my concern about that that I redeployed additional money—£18 million over the next three years out of the extra £55 million at the end of last year, for university equipment. In the Green Paper on higher education, I said that the Government intended that the contribution of the higher education system to the nation's research capability should continue on the present scale, but there was also a need for closer and better work with industry and commerce and the public services, more funding from private sources and better management, yielding greater value for money.

The University Grants Committee's plan to introduce new selective planning and allocation arrangements for its resources for research should lead to better value for money in due course. In the meantime, the picture from the universities is not all bare. On certain indicators, notably income from research contracts, the scale of research activity in the universities appears to be growing. The Government hope that the UGC's new selective arrangements for allocating resources for research can be formulated and begin to operate by the academic year 1986-87.

I have to acknowledge that it can be no simple matter to pick out areas of research on which resources should be concentrated — and by implication other areas from which resources should be withdrawn or reduced. It is a truism that some of the main breakthroughs of science have been made in areas which, up to that point, had not seemed particularly promising, and by individuals the significance of whose work had not been fully understood.

It is therefore necessary for us to ensure that resources are available to support the work of really brilliant individuals in whatever areas, and to enable the United Kingdom to maintain at least the nucleus of a research capacity across a range of areas of research. But that is not inconsistent with some concentration on centres of excellence. Nor does it mean that the United Kingdom should seek to lead the rest of the world in all areas of research. That would be totally impracticable. As the Advisory Board for the Research Councils advised me last December:

"it is unrealistic . . .to expect the UK to keep in the forefront of all fields of scientific research".

We must remember that the United Kingdom's share of world research activity accounts for only about 5 per cent. of the total, and that proportion is unlikely to be significantly affected by even the largest imaginable increase in our domestic expenditure. Rather, the way forward must be to scrutinise carefully the priorities implicit in the present balance of funding between subject areas and to consider whether some adjustments may be needed better to serve the national interest.

As part of the process of scrutinising priorities, the Advisory Board for the Research Councils jointly with the Science and Engineering Research Council last year established an independent review of United Kingdom involvement in high energy particle physics. Total annual expenditure on high energy particle physics is some £55 million or 10 per cent. of the research councils' total expenditure. Two thirds of that expenditure goes on Britain's subscription to the European Organisation for Nuclear Research—CERN. The review group, which is chaired by Sir John Kendrew, in addition to reviewing United Kingdom participation in high energy particle physics, has considered the implications for other areas of British science and for international scientific co-operation of the reallocation of resources from high energy particle physics in whole or in part to other areas of science.

I understand that the Kendrew group's report is to be published next Tuesday. Copies will be placed in the Library. I cannot anticipate what the report will say. The report is addressed not to me or to the Government but to the chairmen of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the Science and Engineering Research Council. I look forward to receiving their advice on Sir John Kendrew's recommendations later in the year.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): My right hon. Friend rightly says that he cannot anticipate the Kendrew report, but when he considers that report will he bear in mind the comment of one of our greatest scientists, Lord Rutherford, that physics is the only science and all the rest mere stamp collecting?

Sir Keith Joseph: I have no doubt that that and other points of view will emerge clearly, whatever is in the report.

Science and scientists make an essential contribution to society — to its material prosperity, its comforts and convenience, and to the general well-being and health of the community. Their work can and does have far-reaching consequences for society. Scientific and technological advance is probably the most potent force for change that there is. Sometimes the public will be rightly concerned about the social or ethical implications of a particular line of research, but I believe that on the whole the scientific community is aware of the moral implications of its work and has a good track record of self-regulation in this respect. From time to time, however, there will be a difference of views within the population as to where a particular line should be drawn and here, as elsewhere, it is essential to balance the moral and ethical arguments against the utilitarian ones. I am not sure that the scientific community has always been very good or very successful at presenting its side of the case in this kind of debate, perhaps because its members are scientists and not theologians or philosophers. However, I think that they may be improving in this respect and I urge them to give even more attention not just to taking the moral dimension into account but to being seen to do so.

I am grateful for the patience of the House and I should like to take this opportunity to remind hon. Members that an exhibition of the work of the Science and Engineering

[Sir Keith Joseph]

Research Council is to be held from 17 to 21 June in the Upper Waiting Hall of this House. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will make a little time available to visit the exhibition, which promises to be full of interest.

10.12 am

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The parlous state of science in Britain means that it is high time that we debated science policy. The Government have tucked this debate away to a Friday when many Members on both sides are fulfilling constituency engagements postponed from last Friday when they felt obliged to be present for the Bill relating to experiments on embryos, which was of major interest to scientists, Members of Parliament and constituents. Attendance in the Chamber today, however, shows that *Nature* was wrong in its comment this week that science has lost its political friends. Many of my hon. Friends wish to speak on this vital area of policy and I hope that they will be able to do so. I draw attention especially to the interest of my right hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) and my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), whose interest in science policy has been continuous since the early 1960s, long before most of the people now leading the scientific establishment had engaged in debates on science policy at all.

To assist the House, I asked the Secretary of State to publish the advice that he received from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on next year's science budget, and I am grateful to him for having done so. I hope that he will also publish the further studies promised by September, which will be a very helpful addition to the board's findings so far.

I am sorry that we do not have the Kendrew report on nuclear physics, to be published next Tuesday, as that is a vital part of the picture. I hope that the House will find time to discuss that report specifically before the summer recess, so that it can be taken into account in the coming public expenditure round.

We listened carefully to the Secretary of State for any inkling of developments in science policy to remedy the present situation, but the advisory board is clearly fully justified in complaining that the Government, Parliament and the country as a whole are complacent about the current financial straits of science. We shall seek to dispel that complacency. The advisory board points out that the Government have planned a 10 per cent. reduction in the volume of research activity in the 1980s, contrary to the trend in other countries, and warns the Government that the economic and industrial effects on the United Kingdom are likely to be grave and effectively irreversible. The least that the Government can do is to grant in the next three years the recommended £15 million, £30 million and £40 million increases above the levels planned for a zero-growth science budget, which now stands at about £600 million. That should be matched by agreeing the bid for £45 million over the next three years put to the Secretary of State by the University Grants Committee to strengthen the science base in the universities.

The Secretary of State explained the problems, spelt out some of the arguments and gave a selective account of the record, but he offered no policy and no promise to fight on the beaches—not even a sprat to catch the headlines. It will be no excuse for the right hon. Gentleman to wring his hands and say that of course he agrees, but there is no money. An increase in the science budget paid for out of a general increase in taxation would make everyone better off in both macroeconomic and microeconomic terms. The only loss would be a political loss for the Secretary of State, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister, because it would be a further dent in the eccentric fiscal calculus with which they have hijacked the Tory party. The Secretary of State is putting his own personal convenience above the interests of science, the country and even the Tory party.

With science and technology now an all-pervasive influence in society, the Government are cutting the total number of qualified scientists and engineers whom they employ on research and development by 10 per cent. in the five years to 1986. They are mutilating the Natural Environment Research Council and the Agricultural and Food Research Council and they are destroying the prospect of a reasonable career structure for research scientists and technicians. Manufacturing industry, too, has cut research and development. Meanwhile, all our major industrial competitors are increasing their efforts.

I assume that the Secretary of State has sought this debate because, after the fiasco over his attempt to supplement science by cuts in student grants, he wants to build up support on the Conservative Benches for the battle that he will be waging with his Cabinet colleagues in the coming public expenditure round for a much-needed increase in the science budget.

Sir Keith Joseph: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can justify the word "fiasco". It may have been a very unpleasant experience for me, but it resulted in the transfer of £55 million to basic science.

Dr. Bray: As the right hon. Gentleman says, it was not a great tribute to his judgment, but the result was to make it clear to scientists that the Tory party was more concerned about well-heeled constituents than about safeguarding the scientific future of this country.

Sir Keith Joseph: I accept that what I originally asked for and had to reduce by 20 per cent. was probably too rapid and abrupt a change, but the people to whom the hon. Gentleman refers accepted a £55 million switch from their resources to basic science.

Dr. Bray: That is a story to which we shall return many times in the future, especially when we see what further steps the Government will take in this public expenditure round.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Bray: I have given way many times. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be called.

To win the further battles more convincingly, the Secretary of State must have a reply to his colleagues, especially to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister, when they say, "You led us into this deflationary hole. You had overall responsibility for policy and research at the start. How will you get us out?" It is from within science that the right hon. Gentleman can find an answer to that argument. Whether he has the insight and the courage to use it, we shall see. If his record of Damascene conversions is anything to go by, anything is possible.

Restoring science to a state in which it can play its necessary role in modern society will probably need a new Government, less dogmatic in their philosophy, and so less hostile to the whole spirit of science. There must be change. It takes a century—in Britain it has taken two or three centuries—to build up a scientific tradition such as we have enjoyed in the past. With modern science, however, such a tradition can be destroyed in a decade of parsimony if the essential links are broken between teacher and student in their seminal years, between ideas and their testing on expensive modern apparatus accessible only abroad, and between basic research and its application in the entrancing synergy of intellect truly linked with social concern.

Let us make no mistake where Britain's scientific strength has come from—a tradition of free inquiry, following where the arguments have led. In Germany the primacy of research is unquestioned, with no mere Government prepared to deny the scientists the resources which they say are needed to pursue their research. But the authoritarian stuctures of German institutions, with the student unable to escape from the control of Herr Professor Doktor until his thirties, are inimical to originality, though strong on exploitation within fields once established.

In France, by contrast, science is part of central Government, caught up in the aspirations and so also in the chauvinism of the moment, able quickly to take new initiatives, but not always able to deliver according to a political timetable, or to take wing on a new idea that does not come from the Government.

In Britain, our tradition of free inquiry, debate, peer group judgment, and ultimate respect for democratic demands and decision have given us world-class universities and a fine scientific tradition at an absurdly cheap price, yet the Government are destroying that by parsimony, misunderstanding, abuse, and hostility. Just when the Robbins wave of expansion should be leading on to access to that tradition by far more working-class children, as was traced so carefully by Professor Halsey, the Government are cutting back on student numbers and on the overall funding of science through the dual support system.

The Secretary of State is also confused about the links between teaching and research. The academic who publishes a paper on queueing theory, the polytechnic lecturer who sends his students out to record the timing of buses, the research student who helps commission the computer programme which transfers work between machine tools in a flexible manufacturing system, and the economist who consults for American banks on the financial futures market, are all doing essentially the same thing. They are all building the bridges between similar pieces of mathematics in the lecture room and the outside world, carrying from one to the other the experience and material which helps keep each alive.

So we have the Secretary of State questioning whether all institutions and departments have to do research, yet urging all to undertake consultancy and industry support. He is cutting off one hand because he wants to make the other hand work better. He takes no account of how he has reduced the flexibility and efficiency of higher education and research, by starving them of resources. It is now far more difficult for the fertile researcher to have his teaching load eased, for the good facilitator who is content to leave research to others to take on the heavier administrative tasks, and for the good communicator to concentrate on passing on the lessons he has learned by teaching the next generation. Because there is not the movement, the informal efficiency of the whole suffers. It cannot be replaced by formal edicts and demarcations, least of all from Whitehall.

The Secretary of State must understand and insist on keeping alive and healthy the traditions and institutions of a free society, and the scientific discourse which has been one of its finest products. Today, that science is all-pervasive, and as relevant to the management of the economy and the funding of resources for education and science as it is to the working of the Secretary of State's brain, and the Secretary of State is crucifying it.

Pick up *Nature* any week. Last weekend's copy had on the cover the best electron microscope pictures yet of the structure of acetylcholine receptors in synapses—the mechanism which makes nerve cells fire. The Secretary of State can relax. It is not from his brain. It is from the electric organ of the electric ray torpedo marmorata, by which it knocks out its victims with a 500 volt punch by firing all its nerve cells at once. Come to think of it, perhaps the Secretary of State's brain might be organised on a similar principle.

The resolution at different depths is excellent, enabling researchers to match the size of the receptor to the messenger protein molecules that bind to them and trigger the firing of the cell. The electron microscope is an essential tool in this and a wide range of other research, covering biology, metallurgy, material science, solid state physics, microelectronics and other sciences. In 1948 the best electron microscope in the world could be bought for about £3,000—the price of a Rolls-Royce car. Twenty years later the best cost £12,000—the price of two Rolls-Royces. Today, the best costs between £250,000 and £1·5 millon depending on the type—the cost of about 10 Rolls-Royce cars.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): It depends on the Rolls-Royce.

Dr. Bray: Rolls-Royces do just the same job today and are based on very much the same engineering principles as in 1948. The difference lies in the power, sophistication and cost of the electron microscope.

There is a sophistication factor. To look at individual molecules, a magnification of 1 million or more is needed. High voltages are required to look deep into specimens, and chemical analyses of the elements present in the object can be presented. These are the necessary tools of modern research. Without them it is not possible to work at the frontiers of science.

The work is not of purely scientific interest. Dr. Leslie Iversen, the former head of the MRC Neurochemical Pharmacology unit at Cambridge, has had set up for him by the American pharmaceutical company Merck, Sharp and Dohme a new £25 million laboratory at Harlow to design drugs based on a knowledge of neuro-receptor sites of the kind illustrated in the *Nature* article. The immediate target is senile dementia, or Alzheimer's disease, which causes great distress and affects some 20 per cent of the rapidly growing number of 80-year-olds and above.

It is a huge world market. Many scientists feel that the results of Dr. Iversen's work should be available to science generally and for exploitation by British pharmaceutical companies, instead of having been pre-empted by an American company. It is better that the work should be

[Dr. Bray]

done, and be done in Britain but, in the present climate, it has taken the Medical Research Council three years to decide whether, among many competing claims, Dr. Iversen's unit can be replaced in this most promising area of clinical research.

Dr. Iversen is among the more fortunate. The authors of the article, Brisson and Unwin, are at Grenoble and Stanford. Dr. Nigel Unwin was in the Cambridge MRC labs before he was enticed to Stanford. The equipment that he used was supplied by Dr. Peter Gatan, who was professor of metallurgy at Imperial College before he went to America, because in Britain there was not the market or finance to set up his company for making equipment for use with electronic microscopes.

In British research laboratories there are six high-voltage electron microscopes, purchased in 1971. The recent UGC money for equipment will bring us nowhere near the 40 high-voltage electron microscopes of more recent vintage used in Japan.

Material science is a heavy user of electron microscopes. In the US, the National Critical Materials Act 1984 set up a council within the executive office of the President to co-ordinate Government policies and oversee the $1 billion per annum Government funding of research in materials. In the United Kingdom, the SERC budget for materials research is £4 million per annum. When the Collyear report recommended a serious material science programme in the United Kingdom, the Minister for Information Technology, the hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Mr. Pattie), said that industry would have to fund it. It is pathetic.

When Dr. Colin Humphreys of Oxford, the newly appointed professor of metallurgy at Liverpool, sought Department of Trade and Industry support for a new materials centre at Liverpool, the Minister of State turned him down flat earlier this month. It would be difficult to think of any development at the price likely to contribute more to the redevelopment of Merseyside and the industrial future of Britain.

The Government must fund science. As I said in the House on 15 May when we were debating industry and new technology, there is no inherent competitive incentive in a market economy for private or public commercial organisations to undertake pre-competitive research. Basic science and pre-competitive applied research, including research into enabling technologies, and in public concerns such as health, safety and the environment, will not be done unless they are done by the Government. Charity, whether from individuals or industry, plays a useful part in the more popular bits of medical research but elsewhere their contribution is marginal, and will remain so, however much industrialists are lectured by the Prime Minister. Sometimes even pre-competitive research, which is essential to the survival of an industry, is not undertaken by firms on their own because the benefits of the research cannot be used to strengthen one firm against its competitors.

When we debated new technology policy on 15 May, there was a deplorable response from the Secretary of State and the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry. I am sure the right hon. Gentleman knows that most of the support for innovation schemes that he began to build up when he was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry have now been dismantled, because, despite the overall increase of Government support for industrial research and development, there was no increase in overall research and development in manufacturing industry, and most of the money was just going into research-intensive firms which were already doing well out of Government defence research and development contracts. The Secretary of State did not adopt policies which would ensure additionality.

Today we are concerned with science, basic science and mainly pre-competitive research. Just as with technology, the needs and opportunities vary so much, and the position is moving so fast, that international comparisons at a particular time are no longer an appropriate guide.

Let us consider the international comparisons. The Reagan Administration cut development programmes on the new energy technologies left over from the Carter Administration which had been initiated before the oil glut. But President Reagan has increased, and is still increasing, federal funding for basic science. Federal funding for basic research in physical and life sciences and engineering in universities and colleges has been increased by 30 per cent. in real terms from 1981 to 1985. As the office of science and technology policy in the executive office of the President explains:

"Government has a responsibility to help our colleges and universities create an environment for attracting and retaining faculty of the highest quality. That means improving the climate for research on campus so that ambitious scientists and engineers won't feel compelled to take jobs in industry if they want to be competitive in research."

This is the American President's office talking. It goes on:

"In the long run an academic brain drain is devastating for universities and industry alike, because universities simply won't have enough faculty to teach students, particularly in the fastest moving areas of science and engineering. And without newly trained talent, industrial technology will surely dry up."

With these priorities, Reagan's America is a million miles away from Thatcher's Britain.

France is planning to increase civil research and development expenditure by 4 per cent. per annum in real terms for the next three years, making it a 40 per cent. increase in eight years, bringing research and development expenditure to 2·6 per cent. of the GDP. Government-funded civil research and development in 1981, according to OECD figures quoted in the Government's latest review, was 0·81 per cent. of the GDP in France, 1·05 per cent. in Germany and 0·64 per cent in the United Kingdom. In absolute terms, their civil research and development expenditure is higher still, and increasing, while Britain's remains frozen.

What should we spend, and why? Research and development does not, by itself, secure economic growth. On the supply side, there need also to be comprehensive and related programmes for investment and training in an overall policy of support for innovation, which is a necessary element in overall competitiveness. On the demand side, the economy must be so managed that there is an adequate level of effective demand at home and abroad, with a monetary policy aimed at securing a stable level of price competitiveness.

If the Secretary of State wants to know how that can be managed better than it is being managed at present, I invite him to come to the international conference of the Society of Economic Dynamics and Control at Imperial college later this month, where he will see, among many interesting papers, United Kingdom Treasury officials

demonstrating methods that were developed with Social Science Research Council support before the barbarous attack that the Secretary of State made on that institution.

It is an interesting and potentially important cross-fertilisation between economics and engineering. I do not see how the Secretary of State can crib at that. He will argue that the market will produce the investment and a greater element of applied research, development and training than I believe it is likely to do in Britain. It is not simply that the Secretary of State is asking for too much too quickly from a weakened industry. The problem is inherent in the role of research and development in competitive markets.

The problem — as taught not in Leftish British economic departments but in solid Ivy League economics departments and capitalist business schools in the States, even in those monetarist holy of holies, the economics department at Chicago and the Hoover institute at Stanford — is not that the invisible hand is like the emperor's new clothes — simply not there — but, as Professor Joe Stiglitz of Princeton and All Souls, who pioneered so much of this work, puts it — that the invisible hand is slightly palsied.

If we write down what people will buy and sell with the information available to them, we will find that, to work a market, information costs money, as any other production cost costs money. Wherever there are information problems, there are Government interventions which can make everyone better off. Either information is not generated because it is too costly or it cannot be witheld from competitors, or if it is generated it is better for the economy if it is shared. The arguments are rigorous — so rigorous that I doubt whether the Secretary of State could follow them in full because they are rather mathematical — but the Secretary of State and his right hon. Friends are giving a spectacular and appalling demonstration of what ignoring those arguments means in practice. It means the dereliction of a modern industrial economy.

I should like to see a doubling of research and development in manufacturing over three or four years, which is possible and which is needed to secure the technological competitiveness for the re-industrialisation of Britain.

The Secretary of State believes that the market will determine the research and development needed in industry, but he would surely agree that the basic science must be there to support it. Why, even Korea and Taiwan have this year decided to establish research programmes and institutes in materials science and microelectronics because they see that branch factories such as they now have — and such as we have in Silicon glen in Scotland — offer no secure future. Alvey is not enough. Korea and Taiwan will match that.

The economic argument for basic science is that if we do not practise it we will not be able to understand, still less apply, the new technology that it generates. A scientist who gives up working and reading at the frontiers of a rapidly moving subject will find that within a year he can no longer understand his former colleagues.

Much of science at its most applied and applicable is now moving with unprecedented speed — molecular biology, genetics, material science, electronics, system theory — I hesitate to mention more in case some scientists feel that I have deliberately left their subject out of a comprehensive list.

When there is such a rapid and such a comprehensive dependence of new technology on basic science, any medium-sized industrial country has an interest in fostering its basic science, to understand what is going on, to have the facility to apply it as applications appear possible, and to train the applied scientists and technologists on the science that they will be applying.

It is true that earlier in this century scientific discoveries often preceded by 20 or 30 years the new technology products and processes that they made possible. That lag is now falling. In areas such as molecular biology and microelectronics it is under 10 years. So in Britain, where we have had a fine tradition of basic science, it is only common sense to keep it alive and healthy. Yet it is declining, whether measured by citations in papers and patents, in patent registration, in papers produced, or in Nobel prizes. The Secretary of State does not need to wait for the evidence. It is there. The causes of decline have been greatly increased since the squeeze on the universities in 1980-81 tightened the pressures on science.

It is not a motivation for science that the Opposition would favour, but I have difficulty in understanding why the right hon. Gentleman and his friends do not accord to science the same priority as they accord to defence, law and order, national prestige and social privilege. Scientists are no angels, and there are plenty who would respond to a chauvinistic lead from the Government, such as President Reagan gave in the United States. A boost for science even now would be a cheap and effective way of boosting the kind of Britain which the Prime Minister seeks. If it will help the Secretary of State with his colleagues, I am even prepared to say that it would be embarrassing to the Opposition.

However, I suspect that the Government are incapable of making a move because they are so hag-ridden by the anti-science brew served up by the combination of that weird trio, the right hon. Gentleman, the Prime Minister, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. If ever there were an argument for the cultural contribution needed from science, it is embodied in the background of those three: the aging gru, believing that whatever he cannot think out for himself is not knowledge, yet incapable of reading the language of science; the financial journalist, product of Oxford PPE — philosophy, politics and economics — from its slickest, most superficial and arrogant period, when its detachment from modern economics was yet to become a public scandal; and the second-class chemist, for whom her science was merely a channel through which she could pass to the indulgence of her political obsessions.

The openness of mind, the readiness to listen, the concern with objective reality, the acceptance of democratic and hence peer group review, which are fostered by science are not the prerogatives of science, but they are essential in any Government who are going successfully to foster science and win for the country the fruits that it can offer. Because those qualities are absent from the inner councils of this Government, the right hon. Gentleman will not, I believe, win for science the increased resources which he knows are needed.

Mr. Crouch *rose*——

Dr. Bray: I shall not give way. I have already spoken for too long. The hon. Gentleman will be able to make his speech.

I find useful the distinction within basic science between pure research and strategic research, introduced

[Dr. Bray]

by Irvine and Martin into the OECD Frascati definitions of research and development. Indeed, their study "Foresight in Science for the Government's Advisory Council on Applied Research and Development" is a valuable contribution to science policy. I hope that the Secretary of State has read it.

I do not like the term curiosity-oriented research because it attributes a motivation to the researchers far short of the great aspirations that often drive their pursuit of knowledge. The economic and social benefits from it may not be formulated or agreed, and their cultural dimension may not be emphasised, because the actual content of the questions asked in their research marks it out as of significance for mankind, for those who have eyes to see, but the nature of the scientific venture is such that it is often only the researcher himself or the little village of researchers in the peer group who at that stage have the eyes to see. I shall come to the subject of the criteria by which research resources should be allocated for this kind of work.

There is a clear area of strategic research carried out with the expectation that it will form the background to the solution of recognised practical problems, as the Secretary of State said. While large science-based companies may devote 5 to 10 per cent. of their research and development to such strategic research to be able to follow it, the bulk of it is publicly financed in this and other countries in universities and laboratories.

Here, decisions on the allocation of resources have to be made. Irvine and Martin make out a persuasive case, based on the experience of the United States, Germany, France and Japan as well as Britain, for a systematic effort to identify promising areas of basic science, given the increasing speed and pervasiveness of its effects on technology. The experience should be organised by the Government, but it should involve the whole scientific community and lead to the broad allocation of resources.

Not only must the research councils and the Advisory Board for the Research Councils be involved, as they are already, but also the universities, the University Grants Committee, the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education, the Departments of Education and Science, Trade and Industry, and Defence, and industry and the unions.

This is a task for the machinery of government for science which my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition outlined in the current issue of *Link-Up*. A Cabinet Minister designated to speak for science, a chief scientific adviser with a proper staff, and a council on science and technology, are needed. The management of science budgets should remain with Departments acting within a comprehensive strategy. Democratic planning of the economy generally, with its wider spread of responsibility for decision-making, requires a modern information system, widely accessible in government and out. It is an area of information technology totally neglected by this Government, who are not even conducting a survey of annual research and development within industry.

A Cabinet Minister, says my right hon. Friend, with a brief to create the information system needed for democratic planning, not as an overlord but as a co-ordinator working closely with colleagues, could be the driving force needed for science and technology also. Within such an arrangement, science and technology could play their full part both as resources and as claims in the management of the economy.

The three claims — support for research and development in industry, support for strategic research, and support for pure research — should be settled by different but overlapping considerations. Support for research and development in industry, with the emphasis on fairly short-term development for the re-industrialisation of Britain, should be pitched at the level needed to lead and to match progress towards that objective. Support for strategic research would depend on the number and scope of strategic areas chosen, and support for pure research would be set to encompass those opportunities for support of excellence in basic science that were not encompassed by the strategic programmes. Both skilled manpower supply and expenditure would of course, be constraints, but not within pre-set target ceilings and cash limits set irrespective of effectiveness and cost.

The absence of such machinery has allowed uncoordinated and short-term considerations to mutilate the Agricultural and Food Research Council and the Natural Environment Research Council. It has led to cuts in the support for innovation schemes expanded by the Secretary of State. It has left nuclear physics to be reviewed on its own by the Kendrew committee, whose report we have yet to see. It has sold out on medical research opportunities. It has left engineers as uncertain of their role as ever. It has left defence research as remote as ever from civil applications. It has positively invited our best scientists to leave the country, and the country's service, and has bogged down those who remain in increased effort to get their share of diminishing real resources in the dual support system.

As the leading article in *Nature* said yesterday—in a part which the Secretary of State did not quote — the erosion of morale is too rapid to wait until the next election, for there may be little left by then. The least that the Government can do is to grant in full the ABRC and UGC bids to strengthen science, and set up sensible machinery of government for science and technology to secure the technological foundations of recovery.

We call upon the Government to nurture the science and technology on which the future of this country depends, instead of so wantonly destroying it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Before I call the next hon. Member to speak, the House will wish to know that no fewer than 20 right hon. and hon. Members hope to contribute to the debate. Therefore, I appeal for short speeches.

10.53 am

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): At the beginning of this year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I had the privilege of being entertained—I believe that it was entertaining—by Lord Flowers and others at Imperial college. He brought together several of his friends, including Sir David Phillips, Sir Ronald Mason, John Ashworth and Sir John Kingman, to review the problems of science in Britain. My right hon. Friend will not be surprised if I say that, having launched a

personal study during the succeeding months into the well-being of science, I shall have a small contest with him today, which I hope that he will accept from a previous and loyal Parliamentary Private Secretary.

I believe that the Government should move resources towards science rather than look for ways of economising on its expenditure. My right hon. Friend will know that no one believes more strongly than me in trying to reduce the burdens on taxpayers. I do not advance a move towards higher taxation. However, the time has come when we can no longer take the risks that we are running in the well-being of the country for which we are responsible.

The first of my findings is slightly audacious, but I hope that it will be acceptable to my right hon. Friend. I believe that science should be driven by market demand, and that the demand-pull of markets should reach backwards towards the science-push of which we are conscious and which is being funded. That means that we must define objectives. Governments do not usually like defining objectives, even if Oppositions do. The market-pull is to meet competition on an increasing scale from many major industrial countries and we cannot ignore that. We must examine the means available to forecast how we should move forward in science. That will require a gathering of knowledge, ideas and information from our competitors to try to determine what will be the products of the future, and then to back-track those to the strands of science that we now have. That is not a mathematical or philosophical difficulty particularly for politicians, who have the benefit of hindsight at their instant command.

There is no doubt that the present position, with each Department of State setting its objectives in the light of its priorities and programmes, is not the sort of objective that should result in statements such as the one from the science board of the Science and Engineering Research Council, responding to the requirements of four sciences — physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics. The board reported that those sciences could not find the money to finance about one third of their alpha-rated projects — those of the highest merit that should be funded at all costs.

My right hon. Friend will recall that, at the conference at Imperial college, Sir John Kingman said that only 74 per cent. of his alpha projects could be funded, and that the figure could drop to 60 per cent. Sir James Gowans, secretary of the Medical Research Council, has said that, whereas in 1982-83 85 per cent. of his projects were funded, in 1983-84 the figure had dropped to 53 per cent. Sir David Phillips, the Oxford biophysicist, has said that the volume of science will be about 25 per cent. less in 10 years' time than it is now. He was sounding a warning bell, as a fellow of the Royal Society and a biophysicist of world renown, that we cannot ignore.

What will be the result of all this? If one examines the document "Charter for Jobs" published by that strange organisation which came above ground last month but which seems to have disappeared, one finds information that looks into the past specifying how growth rates of real national product per worker hour and real national product over five-year moving averages have all declined. But the arguments deployed by such organisations do not contain real solutions, other than the Government spending more money. If one considers matters to which that organisation drew no deductive attention in its document, one sees that the key factor, which illustrates the way in which our scientific ability is declining and will continue to decline is that, during the past 20 years, the percentage of manufacturing firms working at capacity has decreased from about half to about 30 per cent. That has nothing to do with the oil crisis or the world recession during the past decade. The fact is that Britain has declined in competitiveness at an unacceptable rate that must not be tolerated.

The science policy research unit at Sussex university — a university of whose court I am delighted to be a member — has considered how competitiveness will move forward in the 1980s and 1990s. It has done some startling work, to which the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) referred, relating to Britain's share of scientific publications worldwide, our share of citations worldwide and the number of foreign patents taken out in the United States. In all those areas, Britain's share has declined unacceptably. The share of the United States, the Soviet Union and France has also declined, to the benefit of West Germany, which has had a small increase, and Japan, which has had a startling 30 per cent. increase during the past decade. As for citations, the Japanese have taken over the reference base on which so many scientists rely for their publications. They now refer to Japanese publications 50 per cent. more than they did 10 years ago. The Japanese have now soaked up from the West all the science it has and are moving forward into an era of innovation which is well funded and devoted to strategic tasks which have been identified.

In considering the ways in which various countries determine how to use their scientific resources, there is no better example than that which the Japanese provide in the deployment of their science and technology agency. The agency has been functioning since 1956. In the past 15 years it has brought together in five-year programmes the opinions of those in industry, the universities and Government. About 4,000 to 5,000 people at a time have been invited to distil their opinions on where the country should be going with its science, technology and industry. This analysis, which results in consensus, is something which we should be able to achieve.

Success does not lie merely in the amount of money which is spent. The United States spends more than Japan on higher education — $8 billion a year compared with $5 billion. We spend about one fifth of that which Japans expends. The number of researchers, scientists and engineers in higher education is not the sole crieterion. The United States and Japan have about the same number. The clue lies in the research and development which is carried on in higher education as a percentage of all national research and development.

It is true that in Japan 75 per cent. of all research is funded by industry. However, the key figure is the number of people working in higher education as a percentage of all national research and development. There lies a clue to the success of the Japanese and the danger for us in future. We employ about 11 per cent. of our researchers, scientists and engineers in higher education. The United States, West Germany and France employ about 15 per cent. but the Japanese are employing 28 per cent. They are putting their best men at the sharp end. The rapid advances that they are making are such that it will not be a matter merely of trying to erect trade barriers against their products as a solution. We must not fail to understand that it is in investing in the brightest people that we can compete. The only way in which we can compete with Japan and other far eastern countries is by moving up the scale of industrial competitiveness.

[Mr. Kenneth Warren]

A third factor in an area in which Government policy should be developed is the co-ordination of information. There seems to be no way at present in which we can bring together knowledge of what is happening in universities, research councils, industry, Government and research establishments. There are organisations which meet in an ad hoc fashion but that are not akin to the scale of co-ordination that we must achieve.

We must come to some conclusions about our economic and social needs. We must examine all the areas of sciencee and technology which have the potential to meet those needs. We must establish priorities and certainly we must establish forecasts. At present, our objectives are not clear to our scientists. Too many industrialists are not aware of what the scientists are doing. We can achieve a great deal by setting objectives, giving leadership and co-ordinating the knowledge that is available. The Government are the only agency available to carry out that co-ordination.

We have a broad and deep basis of good science in the United Kingdom but its real value has yet to be recognised and used. Our task and our duty must be to mobilise these human resources to improve the well-being of our people.

11.4 am

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): It is not my intention to add to the Government's embarrassments by joining in the general demand for a more or less massive increase in expenditure. I want instead to warn the Government of an imminent embarrassment towards which they are drifting in an area related to the topic before the House and to indicate to them the way in which they could avoid it.

The key document in this matter is a letter which was issued from the office of the Leader of the House to the many members of the public who had written to him with the plea that the Government should find time for the completion of a Bill in the present Session on the subject on which the Warnock committee reported, namely the creation and use of human embryos for scientific experiment.

In the course of his letter to the Leader of the House wrote:

"the Government has not thought it appropriate to form a collective view on the merits of this legislation, believing that it raises issues best left to the individual consciences of Members of Parliament."

That is an important declaration of Government intention. The issues which such legislation raises are those which are inseparable from the conclusions put forward by the Warnock committee. The Government have therefore committed themselves to ensuring that when in due course they come forward, as they must, with legislation, that part at any rate of the legislation will be "left to the individual consciences of Members of Parliament" and no collective view of the Government will be formed upon it.

The Government have said frequently in debates upon this subject that they are neutral. It is not possible to be neutral as between what was proposed in that legislation and the proposals of the Warnock committee. But two things have happened in these past months which are relevant to the Government's considerations. First, they have learnt upon what lines the House will support legislation if the issue is "left to the individual consciences of Members". Secondly, the recommendations of the Warnock committee have begun to come to pieces in the course of debate and of the examination to which they have been subjected, so that they can form no longer a satisfactory base on which any Government can frame legislation.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Powell: No, I shall not give way. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not mind if I continue. It is part of my habit to give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I have, in a debate in which a number of hon. Members wish to speak, a substantial speech to make and I hope that he will allow me to pursue it.

Several times already in the course of the debate, quotations have been offered from *Nature*. It was on 7 March that *Nature* published a leading article of which, so far as I know, there has not subsequently been any rebuttal, nor has there been an arrangement made for an apologetic leading article to follow it in a later issue. In the course of a leading article on the subject of the proposed legislation, the editor of *Nature* wrote:

"The missing ingredient in the debate"—

that was the debate of 15 February—

"was the clear statement of what exactly are the benefits of investigations with human embryos."

He continued with this staggering sentence:

"That is not surprising, for as yet there have been no such investigations."

I saw no reports of angry crowds gathering outside the office of *Nature* demanding that the editor withdraw a statement which put a foot straight through the allegations and recommendations of the Warnock report. On the contrary, so convinced was he of the correctness of what he was saying that he went to the length of offering a prize for those who could suggest what investigations there might in future be within this area.

Being naturally inquisitive, I corresponded with the editor of *Nature* in due course to inquire how he was getting on. I did not receive an answer from him until 8 May because in the meantime he had been away at the Hanover fair. He replied:

"The position is that we have had about a dozen proposals, some detailed, some vague. I hope that we shall have opinions on these in a month or so. I have not yet decided how we shall publish them, but I shall make sure that you have a sight of what we plan to publish before it actually appears."

I am much obliged to the editor of *Nature* for his candour in reporting upon the response to his desperate plea to those concerned: "While no investigations are in progress at the moment, kindly let me know what investigations might be put forward to make up something of a case."

However, I did not think that it was good enough to go on waiting to hear from the editor of *Nature*. I said to myself, "This is too important to be left to correspondence with a periodical, however distinguished. I will go to the fountainhead. I will go to the Minister for Health because he is personally—not as Minister in his official capacity—opposed to the contents of the legislation. He must have thought deeply upon the subject. Moreover, his Department has been concerned in studying the legislation in great detail and advising upon the consequences if it were to be passed. So I cannot do better than to address myself to the Minister himself." Therefore, I asked the Minister, in a written question,

"if he will list the establishments in which he is aware of human embryos being currently possessed for purposes which would be outside the terms of the authority defined in the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill".

The reply which I received will be instantly recognisable by all students of that handbook of politics known as "Yes Minister". Mr. Hacker's—I am sorry, the right hon. and learned Gentleman's—written answer was:

"We do not have sufficient detailed information to enable us to speculate on the effects of the Bill as precisely as the question asks."—[*Official Report*, 17 April 1985; Vol. 77, c. 410-11.]

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): A good answer.

Mr. Powell: It was a very good answer. He said he did not know. He said that his Department did not know. So here all this agitation was going on, and yet the Minister was quite unable to draw attention to any establishment in which anything happening was incompatible with terms of the legislation to which he was personally opposed.

Therefore, I was not altogether surprised when, in the couple of articles, which many hon. Members will have read, in the *Sunday Telegraph* on 19 and 26 May 1985, Mr. Graham Turner, the author, said of one of the persons whom he had interviewed:

"So far, he hadn't done the sort of work on human embryos which the Powell Bill would have banned, but very much wanted to."

Nor was I surprised by the general conclusion at which Mr. Turner arrived, from the people he had interviewed in the course of his investigations:

"Too many have become scientist-politicians concerned with putting up a good public relations case for embryo experiments, but a few are genuinely concerned with truth, even to the extent of admitting that their own case is not watertight."

Since it has been alleged that I take no interest in the relevant establishments, I should add that I was careful to inquire of Professor Craft at the Cromwell hospital and of Messrs Steptoe and Edwards at Bourn Hall, to whom I express at once my gratitude to them for the great courtesy and hospitality they showed me. I asked them point blank, "Are you conducting any experiments which are incompatible with the terms of this legislation?" In each case the answer was no—a negative which has been confirmed publicly by both in the course of television interviews.

So here is a pretty pickle. We have Baroness Warnock in an article in *The Times*—opinions may differ as to the good taste or otherwise of the illustration—asserting:

"without continued research in vitro fertilization would come to an end",

yet in the very establishments where vast sums of money are being paid for the continuance of this process, we find that such research was not taking place and is not taking place—nor anywhere else, apparently. There is also the greatest difficulty in envisaging what it might be or, to quote the editor of *Nature* again, "what exactly are the benefits" it might produce.

I felt, however, that it was my duty to do what the Warnock committee had not done in its shoddy investigations, and to ask some pertinent questions, questions as to what were the purposes and the benefits for which it was indispensable for the experiments to be conducted on human embryos. I am much obliged to Dr. Lieberman of the regional IVF unit in Manchester for his correspondence with me and for his assistance to me in this respect. I am not certain that at all stages in the correspondence Dr. Lieberman knew exactly what had hit him; but, at any rate it has been an enjoyable correspondence on both sides.

When I asked Dr. Lieberman what were the purposes for which it was indispensable to conduct experiments incompatible with the terms of the legislation, he kindly referred me to an article by Dr. Anne McLaren published in the *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* in April of this year. Naturally, I examined it with great interest and eagerness. I found that it contained four separate suggestions. Two of them I set on one side at once as they were compatible with the terms of the Bill, being concerned not with embryos but with gametes. That left two propositions. The first was that such experiments were necessary for testing male fertility. I quite understand that it was probably not possible for the Minister for Health to be present at this debate; but he will have been advised by his Department—as I was advised by his Department in writing—that there are other methods of producing that result which do not involve those experiments. So that leaves us with the residual fourth proposition Dr. McLaren put forward. I hope that I may spend a few more moments upon that, because it is of great importance, for it has been the cause of great misunderstanding, and of great avoidable distress occasioned to large numbers of people in the course of the debates which have taken place in preceding months. I refer to the elimination of embryos containing genetic defects.

I will spend a moment or two on the theory which underlies the proposition. It is that if parents known to be liable to transmit a genetic disease will have their children by in vitro fertilisation, and if, before insertion, the embryos can be tested to be cleared or otherwise of those diseases, it should be possible to ensure that those parents do not have children who will carry forward those diseases. That is the underlying theory of the whole proposition. It was contended by Dr. McLaren that for that purpose, "because of species differences" between human beings and the objects of the previous trials which had pointed to the conclusion that the remainder of an embryo of which one or two cells had been biopsied in order to test for genetic disease was viable if inserted—or, as the terminology goes, was totipotential—

"the last step can never be omitted if a procedure is to be used in clinical practice"—

in other words, that it was necessary to experiment upon human embryos in order to clear the totipotentiality of byopsied embryos for insertion. That is a very logical proposition if it is correct; but I am advised that there are strong grounds for taking it to be incorrect.

I was advised on the matter by Dr. McLean of the department of anatomy of the university of Manchester, who assured me that

"the only way in which"

the viability of the embryo from which the biopsy is taken can be assessed

"is by insertion, with subsequent monitoring of the pregnancy".

He assumes that that was what must be meant by "the last step" referred to in Dr. McLaren's paper to which I was referred by Dr. Lieberman.

So we arrive at a second conclusion. Not only has the current practice of these experiments not been demonstrated, though their continuance is supposed to be vital to the continuance of the fertility procedures; but it is extremely difficult and controversial to identify the benefits which it is alleged they might produce—a

[Mr. Powell]

whole field of inquiry into which there is no evidence that the Warnock committee entered in the course of arriving at its foregone conclusion that it was necessary to make provision by legislation for such experiments to be made.

Right hon. and hon. Members may feel that up to this point I have only discharged part of the task on which I set out. They would be entitled to say, "If anything, you have proved too much. You have shown evidence that experiments incompatible with the legislation are not in progress. You have argued that such experiments are necessary. How, then, comes it that pressure is so strong for such experiments to be authorised? How is it that there is such violent, though concentrated and orchestrated, opposition to legislation which would be incompatible with them?"

It is necessary to answer that question, and again I am indebted to Dr. McLaren for supplying the answer. Among the objects which she mentioned, there was a fifth which I now bring to the attention to the House. She wrote:

"Research on new methods of contraception also requires the use of IVF test systems."

I believe that there she laid her finger upon part, though only part, of the answer to the legitimate question of the House: why is it that such pressures have been exerted in order to secure legalisation permitting the use of the human embryo as an object of scientific experiment?

I do not know whether hon. Members have studied at all carefully the terms of reference of the so-called voluntary authority which has been set up between the Medical Research Council and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to exercise those functions of control which the Warnock committee suggested should be vested in a quango. But even in setting out at this stage the objects, they said:

"The aim of any research must be clearly defined and relevant to clinical problems such as the diagnosis and treatment of infertility or of genetic disorders"—

and note—

"or for the development of safe and more effective contraceptive measures."

This bears out what Sir John Dewhurst said in a letter of great importance which was published in the *Daily Telegraph* on 6 June—a letter signed by some of the most eminent obstetricians and gynaecologists in the country:

"we must uderstand that enthusiasm for IVF is now only incidentally concerned with relief of infertility."

Dr. M. S. Miller: Will the right hon. Gentleman go a bit further with the voluntary code between the Medical Research Council——

Mr. Powell: Yes. I will go further. I am in the middle of it.

Dr. Miller: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House that this body which has suggested the voluntary code now has a more scientific attitude, I think, to determining the pre-embryo stage in order to differentiate between that stage and the embryo after 14 days? Will he go further and say that it depends on the development of the primitive streak? The Medical Research Council and the Royal College are very much in favour of experimentation so long as it does not occur after the primitive streak has appeared.

Mr. Powell: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman. I was aware of the views officially put forward on behalf of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, although they are not shared by many of the most distinguished members of that college or by many distinguished members of the medical profession.

I was drawing the attention of the House to what Sir John Dewhurst wrote, namely:

"What is more important (to some) is that there should be a plentiful supply of disposable human embryos in the laboratories for testing drugs (and especially in developing abortifacients)."

Some of us who have been interested in this matter for a series of months have been struck by the nature of the pressures which lay behind the opposition to legislation. The presence of commercial motivation, the existence of large potential profits in the background, was unmistakable. Here lies one of the central points. By research upon human embryos, the means——

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Powell: No. I am finishing my speech. If the hon. Member is called, he can make his comments then.

The motivation behind much of the demand to have embryos available for experiment is a commercial motivation based upon the possibility and prospect of developing highly saleable and profitable contraceptives and other drugs.

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): Is that not better than abortion?

Mr. Powell: Sir John Dewhurst continues:

"This is not scare-mongering. This is what the pro-IVF lobby itself tells us; and we may suspect that much more is already happening inside some laboratories than we are told."

This then is the answer to the legitimate question: Why is it that, in the absence of current experiments relevant to IVF, and in the absence of logical and rational justification of the need for human embryos for some future experiments, we have not had disclosed the real, effective ground and the real purposes for which that use was to be indispensable?

It is a curious reflection that some of the most incorruptible Members of the House, such as the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton), have found themselves ingenuously accepting, no doubt largely as a result of the careless and inadequate work done by the Warnock committee, the case put forward by those who wish to make major profits out of the exploitation of experiment upon the human embryo.

I am glad to see the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on the Opposition Front Bench, because I have noted with satisfaction and sympathy his growing interest in the exploitation of medicine by capitalist investment, especially from the United States. He will share with me a sense of the sardonic irony that hon. Members whom no one would suspect of any underhand motives should have been enlisted innocently in the service of the interests I have described.

So I have this last advice for the Government. It is that the background to legislation on this subject is changing with astonishing rapidity. It is not only that the work of the Warnock committee is being unpicked and shown to be the shoddy stuff it always was. It is that opinions in the profession are changing in a direction which should facilitate legislation that will be acceptable to the House.

At the end of last month I received a letter from Dr. Edwards of Bourn Hall, and again I express my gratitude

to him for the patience with which he has sustained a correspondence with me on the subject. His letter contains a most important and considered statement by a person who perhaps more than anyone else is famous and eminent in this branch of medicine. He wrote:

"I would stress that we do not wish to create 'research embryos', but to use those which are known to be genetically or otherwise abnormal and those embryos which are considered unfit for replacement or frozen storage."

That declaration by one of the leading figures in this field is light years away from the recommendations of the Warnock committee, with its acceptance of the creation of embryos for experiment and the use of surplus normal embryos for experiment. That is an illustration, coming from the quarter that it does, of the speed with which public debate on this matter has brought about a reconsideration on the part of the medical profession and particularly of those who are in the forefront of advances in fertility treatment.

The Government will find when they come to frame their legislation that it will need to be framed closely upon the lines that have already proved acceptable to an overwhelming majority of the House. The Warnock committee recommendations no longer offer a basis upon which tenable or defensible legislation can be founded. The Government will have to bring forward legislation on grounds which the House has already pioneered and explored. They will find in doing so that they are also in line not only with the bulk of opinion and sentiment outside the House but with the bulk of opinion and sentiment in the medical profession itself.

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Both sides of the House must be concerned about what I would consider, although I respect the views of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and his friends, to be an abuse of parliamentary time. I think that I am known as a Member of Parliament who can honestly and truthfully say that in the 20 years I have been here I have never abused the use of parliamentary time. The motion before the House was rigidly adhered to in the first two speeches, but 20 Members of Parliament who have some known scientific and technological interest in a matter that is of great concern to the country have had their chance to speak delayed. I urge you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have a word with Mr. Speaker to see how we can end the serious abuses that are continuing to pile up day after day. It must end, in the interests of all Back Benchers. I am sorry that I have taken so much time.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In advance I intimated to Mr. Speaker the subject on which I intended to intervene in the debate, in case he should see fit to warn me against doing so or say that it was unacceptable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am obliged to the right hon. Gentleman, and he has answered the point. This is a wide debate on the Government's policy for science. Had there been an abuse of our procedures, I would have taken action.

11.32 am

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): The hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) has taken away the first paragraph of what I was going to say. It was the point that the House rarely has opportunities to debate the thrust and organisation of the Government's science policy. It is my view and that of many other hon. Members that we should debate it more intensively and more often. Although the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) is passionately concerned about the important issue on which he spoke with great authority, it is right that it should occupy a comparatively minor proportion of today's debate and not, as it could easily do, the whole of it.

The right hon. Member referred to the publication of an article in *Nature*. Some 70 years ago, give or take a few years, there appeared in one of the major scientific journals — I believe that it could have been *Nature*, although I am speaking from memory as I have not had a chance to verify this—a simple equation published by a man called Albert Einstein. It was $E = \frac{1}{2}MC_2$. At that time, about four or five physicists in the whole world appreciated the significance of that announcement. The anti-nuclear lobby could easily say, with the benefit of hindsight, what a good thing it would have been if the formula had disappeared from sight. It could be asked whether we could know what research was being done into nuclear power and nuclear weapons, or what research was likely to be done, for example, into nuclear magnetic resonance scanners, and the benefit of that to the human race. We did not know, and we could not know, and that is the answer to the right hon. Member for South Down.

Alfred North Whitehead, a considerable scientist, was asked about the scope of science and whether we would ever know it all. The argument then was that perhaps we were reaching the stage where the ultimate boundaries could be seen. He said that no, we would never know it all. It was like the branches of a great tree—it keeps on growing, but the space between the branches will always be greater than that occupied by the tree. That is why responsible rsearch, properly conducted, should know no man-imposed limits. That is the most fundamental thing that one can say about the history of science in the last three centuries, and I expect for the next three. That is why we must approach this matter with the greatest possible care. The right hon. Member has made my case in an entirely different context, and he will see why in a minute.

Some very interesting points were made by the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray). He and I share a considerable and long-standing interest in science, and that of the Government in science, and we share many conclusions. His speech was profoundly interesting and is one that will have to be re-read to rediscover the interesting parts. We went wrong in one way, although I do not blame him for this. I know the pressures, under which we all are, in looking to see whether a case can be made for or against the failure of the Government in science. The hon. Gentleman referred to a document in the Library, which contains a catalogue of articles, the headings of which imply that things are not well. The House of Lords report in 1981 implied the same thing, and many other statements have said so as well.

Would it not be so much more constructive if, in this debate and in this House, we sought to focus our attention to discover what it is, under all Governments since the second world war, that has allowed this deterioration? If it can be proved to have continued under successive Administrations, what are the common factors? Can we isolate and identify them, and get some agreement about them? If we can, there is possibility, hope and scope for a constructive change, which I am sure my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would be the first to accept

[Mr. Ian Lloyd]

and carry out. I hope that in the rest of the debate we shall go down that road, rather than down the sterile road of attempting to allocate immediate blame for the past 18 months, two or three years, or whatever.

This year's "Annual Review of Government-funded R and D", produced by the Cabinet Office, is a great improvement on that of last year. It is moving forward the general quality of discussion in these matters and is making more information available. This is welcome progress, and the Government are to be congratulated. We must hope that the progress will continue.

A number of issues are raised in the report which deserve some attention. The first is the old argument of pure versus applied science. Increasingly, I am impressed by the falsity of this antithesis. As I see it, curiosity, to which the right hon. Member for South Down referred somewhat disparagingly, and which can be called fundamental scientific interest, is a seamless robe. Our trouble is that our technological imagination, the grasp of scientific implications and potential, has been declining. I refer not to the absence of curiosity or of the fundamental spirit of scientific inquiry, but to the rather more difficult to define attribute of technological imagination which allows some people to say, immediately on seeing some scientific work, that it has implications and that we can use it or do something with it. We must encourage that quality.

It is sometimes argued that too much is spent on defence research and development. That proportion of expenditure is certainly high. However, as the Secretary-General of NATO reminded us only recently, if we do not maintain the highest standards of research and keep up on the critical frontiers, we may as well pack everything in and buy our weapons systems from those who do. We all know what has happened throughout history to those who have bought their weapons systems, and particularly to those who have bought them from their enemies.

I was struck by the coincidence that the hon. Member for Motherwell, South should have used the example of electron microscopes, as I had intended to comment on technological inflation. That inflation lies behind many of the resource allocation problems involved in scientific research. The electron microscope has not yet reached its limit. Next year's will cost about 10 times as much as this year's, and in a decade's time, the next electron microscope will probably cost about 10 times as much as the one now on the drawing board. That is an inescapable development. Such technological inflation is built into the very structure of advanced science, and we must accept it. But it nevertheless imposes a need to concentrate our research ever more skillfully on the areas in which we do best.

The need for an electron microscope was clearly foreseen. It is one of the most powerful tools of science, yet I believe that the best made are now to be found in Japan. I believe that they have been made in Japan for only the past 10 to 15 years. Why do we not seize such opportunities? Why is our technological imagination deficient, and how can we recreate it in the pattern of social attitudes about which we talk so much? What is to be done?

My next point takes me directly back to an aspect of the speech made by the right hon. Member for South Down. Where is Parliament's vision? Does the House review at length, and annually, the things that really matter? The answer is that in a way it does. For example, we review defence at length and publish a three-volume Blue Paper on it. We debate defence for three days, and that is only proper and correct. After all, where there is no defence, there is no civil state. We debate finance for weeks on end, which is only right and proper, and produce massive documents. We debate the organisation and distribution of social welfare, which is again a proper preoccupation of a parliamentary system. Attached to that is the familiar group of health, law, housing, transport, industry and education. Last, least and almost lost comes science.

We need an annual review of the sort published by the Cabinet Office, although it would need to be much more complete, covering the whole of civil science and not just that aspect funded by the Government. As I think my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) pointed out, such things are done effectively in Japan. Indeed, I have seen how the Japanese do them. To some extent, that lies at the heart of their industrial and national success. But we are quite capable of learning lessons and of making even more interesting innovations at the appropriate stage. One of the most remarkable strengths of the Japanese, not least in technology, science and administrative matters, is that they do not suffer from the "not invented here" factor, whereas we do.

Is Parliament equipped to carry out the annual review of scientific policy that it should be undertaking? I believe that the answer is no. It is significant that we discover from the document that the state rightly spends £525 million, through its Government Departments, on supporting the formulation of policy. But what does the House spend on the examination of the formulation of policy? Select Committee expenditure probably amounts to about £2·5 million a year, and that is just about it. Consequently, we are desperately ill-equipped to pass judgment on the performance or proposals of the Government, where they are dependent upon or influenced by, scientific and technological practice. That takes me back to the case made by the right hon. Member for South Down. There are other examples such as nuclear power, acid rain, supersonic transport, the defence technology options, and the commercial implications of biotechnology — which is, incidentally, a much wider subject than that raised by the right hon. Gentleman. However, we do not have the apparatus.

The United States Congress recognised the problem some 20 years ago, in 1962, and discussed it at length over three or four years. In 1972 it set up an organisation known as the Office of Technology Assessment. I believe that that is what we need. Twenty-three Governments have since sent representatives to examine it in Washington, and I understand that several in Europe are now establishing their own OTAs. We need one, but what is it? It is an independent, separate arm of Congress. It serves both Houses and is controlled by a joint committee of six Senators and six Members of Congress. It is bipartisan, or non-political. It costs the United States $15 million per annum, which works out at about $500,000 per project, and employs a staff of 139.

Given our scale of resources, the 5 per cent. of the world's research and development that we do, and the significance of our science technology, we urgently need to establish a similar organisation in this Parliament which serves, and is controlled by, both Houses. It could be a "think tank" for the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Such an organisation could address fundamentally

the problems that have been presented to us by the right hon. Member for South Down in his Bill, and by the Warnock report. We need an independent assessment to be made by completely objective and impartial people, whose sole responsibility is not to the Government, to the right hon. Member for South Down or to anyone else, but to Parliament and to those who send us here. In that way, we can exercise a more intelligent, effective and discriminating judgment over such matters.

At the other end of the spectrum we have the new anti-fouling provisions, which are the subject of Government regulation. We know absolutely nothing about that matter. We are dependent on taking either the opinion of the Government Laboratory, which is no doubt valid, objective and honest, or that of the organisations which say that the material that we put on the surface of boats is safe and does not kill oysters. Which hon. Member can honestly say that he can make an independent judgment on that? I doubt whether even my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister — whom the hon. Member for Motherwell, South regrettably referred to as a second-class chemist — can say that. Incidentally, we do not need first-class chemists in Parliament, because they would be wasted. In any event, I do not think that they would come here.

Hon. Members should look at the reports which the OTA has produced on acid rain, on the commercial implications of biotechnology and, most recently, on the strategic defence initiative. They are so clear that they are useful to the legislator. They say that something can or cannot be scientifically proved, and they identify areas of doubt and certainty. They say that on the basis of such and such a scientific structure, the legislator has the following options: he can do this and it will cost that, or he should do nothing as there is not enough information to sustain any legislation. We lack such analyses in Westminster, and we will not discharge the duties of this or subsequent Parliaments unless we take action comparatively quickly.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that the Nature Conservancy Council reports to Parliament, not to the Government? Therefore, we are entitled to go to the Nature Conservancy Council for independent opinions.

Mr. Lloyd: I was not aware of that. However, I do not think that it disqualifies my argument. We must strengthen input to the House of Commons.

I am glad that the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee has established a Sub-Committee which has agreed to examine the whole proposition and to make recommendations to the House. I have only one request of the Government, which I make earnestly because when I put this point to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister during Question Time she was sceptical—perhaps it was a fast ball—and said that she did not feel that a case was made on the basis of my argument. If the Committee, on examining all these matters, recommends that we should equip Parliament with its own office of technology assessment, appropriate to our resources and the scale of our activities, will the Government give that a fair wind? It is important that we should have that facility.

11.51 am

Dame Judith Hart (Clydesdale): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) who has a wealth of knowledge and experience of these matters. He was somewhat reproachful of my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) and said that we should not be so conscious of party differences. There is a good deal in that, but there have been points in time when we could clearly see whether things were going well or going badly.

The hon. Gentleman will recall that the problem in the early 1950s was not that there were not enough scientists with enough money to do enough good work; it was that British private investment was not putting in the money to exploit what was being revealed to us. An example is microelectronics — the chip. The great complaint was that British industry was not prepared to use the knowledge being given to it by British scientists.

There was a period of considerable decline which led to the brain drain referred to by the Secretary of State because there were not enough posts, not enough money, not enough activity in science and not enough interest shown by Government. That then led to the expeditions to the United States and Canada in an attempt to bring back those who had gone there with the brain drain. The reason that the efforts to recapture those who had gone to work in the United States and Canada proved relatively successful was that they were needed in this country. Posts were not being lost through lack of money in the research councils. Posts in university research departments were not being cut because of lack of money. The posts existed and the people were needed. At that time we spoke of the white heat of the technological revolution. It did not last long enough.

I welcome the debate. I agree with other hon. Members that it is scandalous that we have not had a proper discussion about science policy for so long. Indeed, the subject has been left to the other place, whose debates make devastating reading. I shall not run into the hazard of quoting from the other place, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it emerged clearly from those debates involving eminent scientists and scientific administrators that even their restrained language and admirable civility could not conceal their anger and distress about one simple point —that more money is needed, but it is not coming from the Government. That was the central theme of their remarks, and it is something on which we should concentrate today.

Of course, we can all make claims in various areas of Government expenditure that we should be exempted from cuts and the economies of Government—whether it be welfare, social services, housing, the National Health Service or overseas aid. Therefore, there is a certain duty upon us to ensure that if we seek more money for basic research—which is the general tenor of the debate—we must be ready to say where that should be found. We must also say why we wish that to be given a high priority.

The answer to the second question is evident. Basic research is the very foundation of future national success. We are at a time when we must look ahead and it will not be long before the oil runs out. We have been living on oil for the past seven or eight years. As it runs out, the fact that there has been such a desperate decline in our manufacturing industry and the lack of competitiveness in the new technologies of manufacturing industry will matter desperately.

Our manufacturing decline will continue apace unless we can change the momentum of what is happening in basic research and its application in industry. Again, basic research can actually help Governments to save a great deal of money. Let us consider an example from the

[Dame Judith Hart]

Medical Research Council. It is estimated that some 700,000 elderly and other people suffer from senile dementia. More money needs to be spent on research. But, my goodness, if we can cut down the number of people suffering from senile dementia surely the Secretary of State can get financial support from the Secretary of State for Social Services. It is obvious that money could be saved.

I accept that an additional £55 million has been made available and that the Secretary of State has contrived to put a little here and a little there, but the overall response of the Government has been and still is appalling.

Mr. Dalyell: I want to reinforce my right hon. Friend's point about senile dementia. A fortnight ago I visited the neuropathogens unit at Edinburgh university. Its most senior staff told me that they had to do the most simple tasks, which should have been done by school leavers, because they were so short of funds.

Dame Judith Hart: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for underlining that point.

I wish to quote from the 1984 report of the advisory board. I understand that the 1985 report has just arrived in the Library, and *The Guardian* has provided the opportunity to read a great deal of it. Indeed, I understand that the 1985 report pitches the case even more strongly than the 1984 report.

The 1984 report referred to the financial prospects in the longer term, having drawn attention to the points made by the Secretary of State in his opening remarks—the problems of international commitment related to exchange rates, the problem of cash limits for increased pay and superannuation commitments and so on. The report states:

"We draw attention to the cost increases discussed above because without continued additional funding they will inexorably reduce the resources available for research. We would urge the Government to reflect most carefully before resuming a decline that will seriously prejudice our national capacity not merely to sustain our historic role in the advance of scientific understanding but to develop the science-based industry upon which our future depends."

Those are very strong words.

Mention has been made of the Medical Research Council's last annual report, and the advisory board said: "the percentage of alpha-rated research grant applications which MRC was able to fund in 1983-84 . . . fell to 53 per cent." Again, that is a devastating point.

The foreword to the Medical Research Council report states:

"funds available to it for medical research have . . . fallen by £2 million. A further cause for concern is the plan to 'tax' the Council by substantial amounts in the next two years to provide a fund to aid restructuring in other Councils."

We know that the Medical Research Council has received a little from the £55 million. But the report states:

"Against this financial background, the Council has had to contend with an unprecedented demand for the support of first-rate research in the universities. In addition, there are first-rate opportunities to set up new teams in its own institutes and research units. However, it is now finding difficulty in maintaining even current commitments, and in order to balance income and expenditure in the current year, damaging cuts have been made to recurrent expenditure in all its existing units."

That was the matter mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), when he referred to the Edinburgh unit. The report goes on to say:

"The amount of extra money needed . . . is small",

but it is of desperate importance.

One of the absurdities is that in so many research councils and university departments concepts and ideas are crying out for money to be spent on them. There is no shortage of them; there is a desperate proliferation of ideas and further prospects in every area of science. On the one hand, finance has come from the direct science budget, and, on the other hand, it has come from grants to the University Grants Committee. The UGC has made all its anxieties clearly known about the cuts in its expenditure, but basic research has been squeezed at both ends.

I am afraid that research has been squeezed even more in another area, by the inexorable Government policy of privatisation. I take my figures from the Cabinet Office report. In British Gas, which is about to be privatised, 5·5 per cent. of its capital expenditure — a sum of £45 million — was spent on research in the last year for which figures are available. In British Telecom, which has been privatised, the figure is 12·8 per cent., amounting to £172 million. I am not sure what guarantees we have that that proportion of immensely valuable research and development work will be carried out by privatised companies, or for what purposes research and development money will be used. It is one thing to develop system X, as British Telecom did, but it is another to develop new types of Mickey Mouse consumer telephones. We have no guarantee that the privatisation of public sector industries will not lead to a diminution in that area of industry-funded research and development. Nor is it likely that research in the research councils and university departments will be rescued by the private sector.

The Secretary of State said that he would talk a little more about this, but he did not. He mentioned huge amounts being given by business. What are those huge amounts? Let us look again at the Cabinet Office report. Last year, the figure was £42 million. That is not a huge amount from British industry. Some United Kingdom companies, such as GEC, have large surpluses. If the Secretary of State was right that huge amounts were being given by British industry, and if even 1 per cent. of those surpluses were put into research and development, the financial prospects for basic research in the university and research councils would be transformed. But that is not so, and it is not likely to be so. One of my friends, who is a fellow of the Royal Society professor of theoretical physics, said that a group of industrialists told him:

"We pay our taxes: it's the role of government to pay for basic research."

I fear that that attitude is, sadly, endemic in British industry, and should not be so. No one can look to industry, in the present state of play, to rescue basic research from the neglect of Government.

In the other place, that matter has been described as a cause for serious anxiety. I believe that we must be blunt. A crisis is facing science and the scientists. I have claimed that it is one of the priority areas in which more money is needed. Therefore, if more money is needed, where is it to be found? I said that it was irresponsible not to suggest where money could be found. One could argue the case in the context of the general policies of the Labour party for expansion, reflation, growth and so on. I shall not do that. I shall argue within the context of this Government's policies. I shall argue in the context of dry, not wet, Conservative policies.

The Secretary of State referred in passing to defence expenditure. If the right hon. Gentleman is indeed arguing the toss with the Secretary of State for Defence, let me take

the House through the following figures. Again according to the Cabinet Office report, in 1985-86 total civil research and development is £2,033 million. In the same year total defence research and development is £2,077 million—more. In cost terms, taking an index of 100 for 1983-84 compared with 1985-86, we have the following figures. The figure for all civil departments is 109; for all research councils it is 100. Within that the figure for the Medical Research Council drops to 96. The figure for the UGC is 97; for Ministry of Defence development it is 105 and for Ministry of Defence research it is 108. Therefore, slightly more than half of research and development is within the province of the Secretary of State for Defence, and less than half — a declining proportion — is within civil research and development.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Does my right hon. Friend recall that a few years ago, when a former colleague of ours, Arthur Palmer, who represented Bristol, North-East, was chairman of the Select Committee, there were 174 research and development defence projects, which were outdated and thus continued by old momentum?

Dame Judith Hart: I was going to examine the problems of cutting down research and development in defence. I could argue in the context of Labour party policy and say that, as we shall no longer have nuclear weapons, we could cut out that research. However, I shall not do that. I shall argue in the context of this Government's policy. They want Trident. They are replacing British Polaris by American Trident. If they are to do that, they do not need the research and development that has been necessary to support a British-manufactured deterrent, so a large chunk goes out there.

As my hon. Friend suggests, an enormous amount could be saved on pure economy. I doubt whether the Rayner-type economy efficiency drive has been rigorously applied by the generals and admirals to everything in their little corners. I am certain that, say, 2 per cent. of defence expenditure could be saved simply by ruthlessly pruning things that are no longer needed, wholly irrelevant, outdated or being done inefficiently. I do not believe that that would cause a revolution in defence.

Let us consider another aspect. What will be the effect of the strategic defence initiative? There will be some spin-off from British participation in research on that, in optics, energy transmission and communictions, but it will be under United States control and will help American rather than British companies. It is also likely to distort the distribution of scientific resources.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Dame Judith Hart: In view of the time, I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not.

The distribution of scientific resources will be distorted, increasing defence-oriented research at the expense of basic research by the research councils and the universities. One per cent. of defence research and development would be £20 million. Two per cent. would be £40 million. A 2 per cent. reduction in defence research and development would give an increase of more than 10 per cent. for the research councils or 5 per cent. for the research councils and 5 per cent. to the University Grants Committee for university-sponsored research. A 2 per cent. transfer from defence research and development to civil basic research in the next five years would not merely meet the minimum that the advisory board has laid down this week, which is the least that we are entitled to expect from the Government this year, but would completely transform the position and prospects of the research councils and of basic research in the universities.

I strongly urge the Secretary of State to take that on board in the coming public expenditure exercise and to fight his corner against the Secretary of State for Defence. He should also fight his corner a little more publicly. All those in the universities, the research councils, the scientific press and the community as a whole who share the deep concern that something is very wrong with the British approach to the development of opportunities for basic research could then make it clear to the Secretary of State that he has an enormous number of people on his side in fighting his corner in that way, and I think that he might be able to win his case.

12.12 pm

Mr. T. H. H. Skeet (Befordshire, North): The right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) made a most interesting point about the effect of privatisation on research and development. I understand that the Advisory Board for the Research Councils has set up a working party under the chairmanship of Professor Mathias to examine the funding of research by the private sector and to consider how it can be extended. That group is due to report in September 1985, but perhaps the Secretary of State will comment briefly on it today as it is extremely important.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) made the important point that this debate is being held on a Friday when fewer Members than usual are present in the House. I have examined the position in depth and studied the way in which scientific subjects have been raised in the House in the past year. We had a debate on acid rain. Three debates arose out of EEC documents on air pollution from industrial plants, a programme for industrial technology and information technology. There were two debates under the Consolidated Fund Bill on environmental pollution and the science policy formula. That is not good enough. Science is being brought in on a side wind.

The Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts is considering the vital matter of the science budget and I understand that it will be reporting in mid-July. This major debate should have been deferred until that report was available, so that we could discuss the matter in depth.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does my hon. Friend agree that the importance of science is illlustrated by the fact that so many Members have attended this debate on a Friday and hope to participate in it?

Mr. Skeet: That is certainly true. The Government will have to take the matter much more seriously.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) referred to the Office of Technical Assessment, and I have invited him to make a presentation to the working party of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee. I see some prospect of such an idea coming to fruition. The Government may take up the strategy—only they have the money to do so—or it may be funded by the Royal Society. Certainly the matter will have to be examined in considerable depth.

The Secretary of State has pointed out that there are several sources of Government funds for research and

[Mr. Skeet]

development — that which goes through the University Grants Committee and the research councils and the work that is commissioned by the Departments, especially the Ministry of Defence. The overview required for a general perspective is provided by two bodies — the Advisory Council for Applied Research and Development and the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, under Sir Henry Chilver and Sir David Phillips respectively. That seems a very complicated approach, and when there is a shortage of finance the system may come under considerable strain.

There is a surfeit of money in the United Kingdom and there is no shortage of ideas. Could not they join forces in the national interest? Simply the rate of return on investment in research is too low to be attractive compared with other ventures, hence the growth of capital-rich giants such as GEC, Shell and BP and, at the other end of the scale, Joseph Rothschild (Holdings), which prefer to keep their reserves inviolate. Further, Britain is not accustomed to commercialise innovation and to export the products of its intellectual wealth. The flotation of Abbey Life yesterday brought in about £2·6 billion, but when it comes to Government research we cannot find sufficient funds even to cover fully the alpha projects.

ACARD and the ABRC could provide the beacon light. Jointly and severally, they have provided some fine reports and I pay tribute to their initiative, but those reports simply lie around on the shelves in Whitehall and little has become of them. The most recent ACARD report was published in 1983. The concept of Commonwealth certainly got Britain moving, but the age of technology has scarcely stimulated a generation which regards it as somewhat vulgar and materialistic. Attitudes must change if the United Kingdom is not to be reduced to a European slum. Sir Robin Nicholson will have to stir the dormant ACARD and give the lead that the country so urgently needs.

In evidence to the Select Committee on 19 June 1984, Dr. Roberts of the ABRC said:

"I believe that we really ought to address what our objectives are, then what our strategy to achieve them is, then face up to tactical issues and organisational issues."

But all these aims remain to be achieved.

Let us consider what others are doing to achieve those objectives. Several references have been made to the Japanese. ACARD produced a very good document entitled "New Opportunities in Manufacturing: The Management of Technology." Annex B states:

"Japan began by importing and applying the best foreign technologies reinforced by a strong and consistent Government policy, implemented effectively by a single organisation, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, (MITI), to support and pursue advanced manufacturing technology and to encourage its widespread practical implementation."

MITI was the organism that that country used. I shall make a few random quotations from the same document.

"Japan's acknowledged lead in robotics . . . MITI plans to spend £125 million in its own laboratories to conduct research into new types of material such as high performance ceramics, synthetic membranes for new osmotic techniques, electrically conductive polymeric materials, high performance engineering plastics . . . MITI provides the risk capital . . . MITI also seeks to provide infra-structures . . . The main purpose of Japanese universities is to provide graduates and personnel capable of applying advanced technology in industry . . . The vast majority of engineering graduates — more than 70,000 annually as against 7,000 in the UK".

I have quoted at random, but it is important to draw attantion to the fact that ACARD's ideas have not percolated through to my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State. Perhaps there is no fault in either case, but such ideas have not been implemented in the United Kingdom and it is apparent that we do not have that essential drive in science.

It is also worth considering what happens in Europe. The Federal Republic of Germany has a Ministry of Research and Technology. France has a similar Ministry and an expanding budget. It has been argued that science should be detached from education and transferred to the Department of Trade and Industry or to a separate Ministry. That would at last give it an identity and be in line with developments in Japan, the Federal Republic and France, all of which have achieved considerable success in the past decade.

Nobody welcomes central planning as opposed to devolved control, but the public may wish to ask, "What are the profitable lines of research that should be supported?" They should be given correct answers and the Government should show determination to proceed. The United Kingdom could gain from a simplified structure for funding the science budget. The several integral contributors are subject to a variety of problems. In an expenditure crisis, roads, houses and the science budget are among the first to be subject to abatement. The research councils have been persuaded that state resources will diminish. As recently as January, the ABRC reported: "we consider that a realistic and long term view should take account of the probability of a sustained decline in the volume of resources that can be brought from the science vote."

Including defence, Government research and development is expected to total £4·4 billion in 1985-86. That figure is only about 3 per cent. of total planned national expenditure, which is £131 billion. It should be remembered that health and social security absorb about £56·6 billion a year. As today's technology is the basis for tomorrow's prosperity, and one of the keys to solving the employment problem, it is surprising that, in the case of SERC, for instance, 20 to 30 per cent. of alpha projects cannot be taken up because of a shortage of funds. Something must be wrong. It is perfectly right that social security should be provided in full, but it does not create wealth. It is technology that creates wealth and provides jobs in consequence.

It can be argued that basic, strategic and applied research are part of the country's capital investment as opposed to income account, and should be significantly expanded and protected. North sea revenues, which are running at between £11 billion and £12 billion a year, could be subjected to an annual charge to build up the resources, equipment and intellectual wealth of the nation.

In his report to the ABRC, Sir Ronald Mason remarked on the dearth of strategic research being undertaken. If the United States, Japan, France, West Germany and the Soviet Union agree that that is the right line of approach, and if it is hinted that ACARD has considerable sympathy with that view, why is such little impact being made on the Treasury?

There are some anomalies which should be considered and removed. First, should salary increases, redundancy payments, superannuation and fluctuations in the exchange rate be paid for out of the scientific budget? Should it also be accountable for the restructuring costs? If such matters fall to the charge of the scientific budget,

there must be less money for science. Secondly, is the fiscal system appropriate, bearing in mind the nation's problems? Does it provide inducements to science? Thirdly, who should be responsible for the full cost of sophisticated equipment? The case of the electron microscope has been illustrated today. It is not enough to have a man in a laboratory — he must have suitable equipment to complete his project. Fourthly, should research councils constantly be exposed to the chill wind of Government Departments terminating work sent out on commission and be expected to bear the brunt of sustained losses?

Sir David Phillips, who is chairman of the ABRC and a resourceful man, observed in today's *Daily Telegraph*:

"The board is under the firm impression that we are losing our brighter scientists at an increasing rate and it was very distressing to find that other countries were beginning to capitalise on the investment in our education and our training."

We have produced more Nobel prize winners than any other country. The British are the people of innovation and of ideas. London is the financial centre of the world. It is surprising that we make such a poor result of our potential when it comes to treating the basic requirements of science.

12.28 pm

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): It is a pleasure for me to speak following the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet), who has recently succeeded me as chairman of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee. As he will be aware, when I was chairman, I was keen to see that the House had more contact with the presidents of the royal colleges of medicine so that we could inform ourselves about what they were doing in medical research.

It was a pleasure for us to welcome Lady Warnock, together with two other distinguished members of her committee, to address one of our well-attended meetings. In view of the extraordinary intervention of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), who is no longer in his place, it was a pity that he did not take the trouble to attend that meeting. He would have learned much about the painstaking work done by the Warnock committee and its members. He would then have been able to put to Lady Warnock the views that he expressed today although possibly he had not at that point been put up to the ideas that he expressed today.

Mr. Thurnham: Perhaps the hon. Lady will agree that we live in an imperfect world. The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) criticised the Warnock committee for what he called an imperfect report. It was a report on an issue about which there are many imperfections, including the large number of handicapped children who are born into the world and whom he seemed completely to ignore in his disgraceful speech.

Mrs. Short: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and the other aspect is that the right hon. Member for South Down, who is a campaigner against abortion law, should know that the alternative to failed contraception is an increase in the number of abortions. One does not know where he stands on these matters.

I am pleased, too, to be speaking following the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd), with whom I have worked closely in the House on scientific matters. I endorse warmly his suggestion that there should be a joint committee of both Houses to overview the development and results of science policy.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in addition, there should be an organisation designed to combat the anti-science attitude and atmosphere that has been engendered in Britain by people who have an axe to grind and who combine with various aspects of the mass media to inculcate into the public mind the conception that scientists are never to be trusted and should not be allowed to undertake activities even for the benefit of humanity?

Mrs. Short: I agree with that, as any sensible person must, and the suggestion of the hon. Member for Havant could provide a powerful organ to counter the type of anti-science policies and ideas to which my hon. Friend refers.

The debate has shown that hon. Members on both sides of the House have great concern over the present state of science in Britain. I believe that our problems stem in large measure from the way in which science is taught, particularly in secondary schools, where, because of the present lack of resources, the situation is serious. I regularly visit comprehensive schools in my constituency, when I am at pains to listen to science being taught. I find the standard and range of subjects meagre.

The HMI report says that there is a wide range of ability in some teaching groups, that science is frequently badly taught—I am sure that all hon. Members agree with that —and that we need more qualified graduate teachers of science; we have been saying that for many years. Can the Secretary of State say with hand on heart that every school has enough qualified teachers able to teach science? If not, no wonder he says that our performance has been disappointing.

A considerable responsibility rests on the right hon. Gentleman to see that we have adequately trained qualified science teachers in our schools, not just in comprehensive but in primary schools, too. He cannot expect our best science graduates to go into teaching in schools that are badly equipped and are in a constant state of upheaval, and where their career and income prospects are so poor. The right hon. Gentleman's meanness towards the teachers' legitimate salary claim is appalling, and the children are suffering because of the intransigence of the right hon. Gentleman and the Government.

The Secretary of State in the Green Paper points his finger in the wrong direction. He puts the blame on the universities in saying that they are not producing the graduates that industry needs. There are too many accountants and lawyers in the top jobs in industry. Science graduates have little chance of reaching the highest echelons of British industry, and that is largely the responsibility of industry rather than of the universities.

Many of our good graduates go to America. The brain drain across the Atlantic is worrying. Those graduates are highly valued in America. In the largest British public companies, less than about 5 per cent. of board members have any experience, qualification or knowledge of the technical matters in which their companies are interested. That is an appalling reflection on the present state of industrial management.

The boards are not competent to judge the capability of science graduates who may apply to them for posts. Consequently, they do not appoint them. They prefer lawyers and accountants. The banks and financial

[Mrs. Short]

institutions that control the investment policies of large companies are also badly fitted to judge anything but the companies' accounts, and cannot judge the technical ability and calibre of the people whom they appoint to manage those companies, or assess the prospects of the policy decisions that they undertake or initiate. That is where the difficulty with our industry lies today.

We must consider the problem of the quality of graduates. Few science or technology graduates can go straight into industry from university and make an impact. They must first obtain experience. There are two aspects in which our training and education differ unfavourably and consistently from those of our more successful competitors. First, we specialise far too early in our secondary schools, and, consequently, our science, technical and engineering students have a rather one-sided background with much less general education than their European counterparts to back them up in the tough world of business and the Civil Service.

Secondly, that early specialisation enables the universities to provide standardised three-year courses for most disciplines, excluding medicine, compared with the four-and-a-half to five-and-a-half-year courses in continental universities. In Holland, it takes seven years to qualify as an engineer. That gives the graduates a much better grounding, a broader outlook, greater flexibility and more maturity than our engineering graduates.

It is essential that we lengthen the period of study for science, technology and engineering. That costs money. There, we are up against a difficulty. The Green Paper mentioned the possibility of shortening courses, and the Government appear to be willing to accept the proposal contained on page 26 that two-year degree courses could become "highly coveted". I wonder why they think that they would be. They would be regarded as a waste of time and resources. Their holders would be regarded as poor substitutes for what is needed.

That suggestion appears to be a pale imitation of the French system of grandes ecoles where, in a number of colleges of higher education, short one or two-year high pressure courses are offered to people who pass a highly competitive examination, and where less than 1 per cent. of the students—I emphasise this—who have previously undergone a five-year preparatory course for the examination are admitted. Those are postgraduate courses. The students are 23 or 24 years of age when they take that examination. That is in stark contrast to our unprepared undergraduates who go to university at the age of 18.

The Secretary of State might do better to study more closely the Swiss and German university system which enables highly successful industrial organisations and companies to man their management teams and boards almost entirely with scientifically and technically qualified people, who know about science and technology and the developments in those subjects, and not with accountants and lawyers who know nothing about those matters.

Our polytechnics, which have great potential if they are treated properly—they are not being treated properly at present — rely on local authority funding. Under the policies of the Government, local authorities are being denied the means of providing sufficient resources to our polytechnics. It is dishonest of the Government to demand more output of technologists and scientists to match in number and quality the output of our competitors while, at the same time, they are purposely and consciously depriving polytechnics and universities of the resources that they need to fulfil the requirements that the Government and the country expect of them.

As to research policy, our universities and polytechnics have an excellent record of co-operation with industry in projecting and pursuing important research. They are less successful in co-operating with public sector institutions. Will the Secretary of State disclose how many qualified scientists there are, and their ranks, in the Civil Service staff that his Department employs to administer and adjudicate on applications for grants for research projects? I am sure that we would be surprised by his answer, which, if he cannot give it today, I hope he will give me as soon as possible.

Co-operation between universities and polytechnics and Government research organisations leaves much to be desired. That has happened because of the consistent downgrading by the Government of the staff and activities of our famous Government research establishments, which leads inevitably to the loss of many qualified staff to industry, to the consequent serious decline in morale and to the loss of resources. Where recruitment is contemplated and then approved by a Department, after much haggling, most of the qualified people, even after they have been appointed and offered the jobs that have been advertised, refuse to take up the posts, because promotion prospects in Government research establishments are so poor.

That is a serious development in Government science, of which the Department of the Environment is a prime example. Its scientists have played an important role in developing codes of practice for the construction industry, but unfortunately, under this Government, scientists employed by the Department are prevented from taking part, as they should, in international conferences at which their proposals are incorporated into the codes of practice of and are discussed by representatives of European countries and the science departments of European Governments. Britain cannot send its full complement of delegates because of the expense. Therefore, instead of four of five eminent scientists, who have been involved in developing the work, presenting their reports and attending the conferences to defend their position, only one person is allowed to attend. That is an untenable position, and I hope that the Government will reconsider it.

I hope that the Secretary of State will give us some information about this parlous position, and will let us know his proposals for creating a general improvement in the funding, and therefore the status, of science in Government.

12.44 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): I hope that the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) will forgive me if I do not follow her line of argument. I wish to concentrate on two matters which I believe are central to the debate. The first question is: are the Government spending enough on science? Secondly, is our spending as well directed as it should be?

There is no technically correct answer to the question of how much we should spend on research and development. I do not believe that the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) has found the magic formula when he says quite simply that it should be

doubled. In spite of the counter-example of Japan in the 1950s and 1960s, and that of newly industrialised countries today, it is widely believed—as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, there is good evidence for the belief—that there is a general long-term correlation between a nation's scientific prowess and its economic progress. But it is, unfortunately, impossible to establish specific correlations between research costs and economic benefits that might enable us to arrive at an economist's answer to our question. As this year's annual review of Government-funded research and development states in summing up its fourth chapter:

"The relationship between R & D expenditure and commercial success is not straightforward."

I shall return to that.

Therefore, in addressing ourselves to the question of how much to spend on science, we find ourselves driven back to two non-economic criteria. The first criterion is the historical comparison between our present efforts and the efforts that we have made in the past. The second is the comparison between our level of spending on science and that which is maintained by other comparable countries. The historical criterion is important, because it is the explicit basis of the Government's policy for the funding of science. The official guideline has been "level funding" since 1979. This concept has served as a steel breastplate for the Government over recent years against the Opposition, who were of course responsible for the level of funding in that year.

The crude figures appear to conform with the Government's doctrine. In terms of 1984 pounds, the Government spent £520 million in 1984 through the research councils, compared with £460 million in 1979. They spent £1,070 million in 1984 of R and D in civil departments, compared with £1,010 million in 1979. It is estimated that in 1984 £570 million was spent on university research, compared with an estimated £590 million in 1979.

But when we examine more closely the realities expressed by these figures, we are bound to conclude that "level funding" does not mean "level value". The rise in public sector salaries has been more rapid than that provided for in the Government's annual planning. There have been fluctuations in international subscriptions. There is the notorious "sophistication factor" in equipment costs, and also the implications of university cuts for research overheads. All these factors have played their part in bringing about a substantial reduction in the real purchasing power of the funds provided by the Government for science.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State understands this—hence his gallant and partially successful attempt to increase provision for science at the end of last year. However, I am not sure that some of his ministerial colleagues equally understand the scope and scale of these problems; otherwise, dare I say, the view would not have been taken last year that more money for science could be found only within the Vote of the Department of Education and Science.

I hope that the debate will contribute to a change of heart in these august quarters of the Government. Of course, nothing would help to concentrate the mind of the Government more wonderfully than the row that would break out in the House and abroad if there were any question of Britain following the wholly unacceptable course of withdrawal from CERN.

It is reasonable for the Government, in the absence of any economic logic on which to base a decision, to seek to allocate resources for science on historical criterion based on 1979 levels of funding. However, the application of that criterion should not be purely formal as it is at present. The Government should pay more regard to the real value of their science spending, which has quite simply not been kept level since 1979.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Government should consider transferring responsibility for CERN financing to the Foreign Office Vote, as is done in other countries?

Mr. Jackson: That is a suggestion that should be examined, although it is important to ensure that decisions about scientific resource allocation enable all projects to be assessed on an equal basis.

There is another way of judging the sufficiency of our national scientific effort. That is by comparing our performance with that of other comparable countries. It is difficult to make such comparisons, as the recent dispute about relative spending on agricultural research has demonstrated, but I draw three conclusions from the international comparisons presented in the current annual review.

First, the proportion of the gross domestic product going to Government science in Britain is higher than in either West Germany or France. Secondly, in absolute terms Britain's Government-funded research and development compares well with that of France and West Germany. So far so good, but I am afraid that there is a major fly in the ointment, because the third point that stands out from international comparisons—it has been referred to previously in the debate—is the strikingly higher proportion of British Government research and development which is dedicated to defence science. It is worth recording the figures which are set out in the Government's own annual report.

In 1981 we spent $3,000 million on civil R and D, compared with $3,256 million on defence science. The comparable figures for France—a country with similar ambitions to our own—are $4,370 million on civil science and only $2,591 million on military science. For West Germany, most remarkably, the figures are $6,698 million on civil R and D and only $646 million on military science.

In the light of those figures I must add my voice to the long catalogue of those who over the years have complained about an imbalance which affects not only the allocation of financial resources, as the figures show, but the allocation of scarce scientific and technical manpower. In that respect I have no hesitation in associating myself with a recent speech by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), and with the basic thrust of what was said earlier today by the right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart). But I hope that they will both forgive me if I observe that the position was just as bad during the period when their party was in office. I could apply the same sricture to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), who has just appeared, three quarters of the way through the debate, and is the solitary representative of the alliance in the debate.

As the House knows, it is usually argued that the relatively high level of defence R and D spending in

[Mr. Jackson]

Britain reflects a national choice, with behind it—at least in the past—a national consensus, of a relatively ambitious set of defence missions: the choice, in a phrase, to be the smallest of the great powers rather than the biggest of the small. I confess that I am one of those who are sceptical about whether that ambition is still a sensible one for a country whose total GDP and comparative GDP per capita both now rank a long way below those of West Germany and Japan, some way below those of France, and only just ahead of those of Italy.

I do not think, however, that in order to make my case it is necessary for me to stray into the realm of high politics. I simply ask how far a heavy national military R and D effort is necessary to sustain an ambitious choice of defence missions. It is arguable that the indigenous research and procurement of weapons confers an extra margin of independence. My hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) put great stress on that point. On the other hand, many countries have concluded that the purchase of that extra margin is not worth while.

Indeed, it would be interesting to know whether the Ministry of Defence, the Treasury, or perhaps the Foreign Office planning staff, have ever made a seious study of the cost benefit of the probably rather small increase in military and political freedom of manoeuvre which comes from national procurement as opposed to the purchase of weaponry "off the shelf". If that study were made, I suspect that it would yield some disconcerting conclusions.

There is a further set of disturbing questions to be asked about defence science. They concern the economic and industrial opportunity costs of our heavy concentration in that area. Some hon. Membes will have read the interesting and courageous statement on "Defence Expenditure and Employment" put out in 1983 by the Society of Civil and Public Servants. It may be that the studies which it cites exaggerate the negative correlations that it asserts between military spending and economic performance. We must also be tentative about those interesting studies which suggest that British arms exports, which yield at least some economic return, are dominated by types of weaponry which do not absorb great amounts of research and development funds. Between 1975 and 1979, for instance, aircraft and helicopters absorbed 55·4 per cent. of military R and D spending, but accounted for only 1·68 per cent. of exports.

However, we do not have to rely exclusively on these academic sources. I notice, for instance, that the Government's own annual report on R and D records that aerospace, a large part of whose output is for military purposes,

"is heavily supported by Government R and D funds . . . but does not have a particularly high gross value added per employee."

I notice also the Government's recent studies of skills shortages in information technology, which project a shortfall of 5,000 graduates by 1988. I ask myself what proportion of that shortfall can be accounted for by the huge and growing demand of the defence industries and of military R and D for information technology specialists. It may be that this manpower is most productively employed in these areas, but I doubt it.

As the House knows, the argument of last resort relates to the employment consequences of a change of policy. There are always problems of employment when industries require to be restructured and resources redirected. All I say is that in most other areas of the economy the Government have shown an admirable awareness of opportunity costs and a commendably resolute approach to "crowding out." The time has come to look at military R and D and the defence industries in the same spirit, and I hope that the annual report will continue to seek to deepen our understanding of the problem.

I urge the Government to think again about their policy for science. The central theme of much of their thinking, quite rightly, is to seek to improve the translation of scientific ideas into profitable business. I do not seek to criticise this emphasis, but I do not believe that it makes resources irrelevant — whether the total quantum of resources or the pattern of its distribution.

If we are to have "level value" as well as "level funding", there must be more money for Government civil science. At the same time, let us at last take hold of the nettle of our excessive national commitment to defence science.

12.58 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) and I agreed with 90 per cent. of his speech. He pointed out correctly that too much of our R and D effort at present was spent on defence—to the nation's cost, in that not enough R and D was finding its way into civil applications.

I am worried about the level of Government funding for science and for R and D. I am especially worried that in recent years there has been a move towards any R and D having to have an immediate or fairly immediate industrial spin-off or application. If that philosophy gains ground, very soon science will suffer catastrophically. It is already beginning to suffer, and the Government have to give it urgent attention. If it is allowed to go on for much longer, we shall not be able to put it right as quickly as we have been able to destroy it.

I am also worried about research council funding. The Government tell us that the science budget has not been cut in cash terms, but funds to the University Grants Committee have been cut, so much of the research done in universities has suffered. The Government may be right in saying that the science budget has not been cut in cash terms, but that does not represent the true position, as the hon. Member for Wantage has pointed out. I give a little credit to the Secretary of State because I think that he realises this, as his actions in getting extra money for the science budget showed. I hope that he will say that it is not enough, and that he should get much more because much more is needed because of the problems. For example, equipment has an increasing price over and above inflation. Several hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), have referred to electron microscopes. I do not wish to pursue that line, although I have several good examples, because I think that the point has been made.

Some research develops into new sectors, which suddenly open up with the increasing pace of research and as a result demand much more money than would have been required if funding were simply on the basis of the rate of inflation. These arguments are well understood and have to be got across to everybody in the Cabinet, and not just to the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

High energy physics is a subject about which one cannot say whether its research will have an application in the short term, or even in the long term. That is not the argument. The argument is that, as a total, the research must be supported for various reasons, one of which is that some of it will have applications that will benefit mankind tremendously.

As other hon. Members have said, it is important that we do not withdraw from SERC. An enormous amount of money is being spent on it, but it is a joint European effort and I should be sad if a philistine Cabinet decided that we should no longer continue as members of that body.

The hon. Member for Wantage gave figures for the money being spent on research and development in defence rather than in the civil sector. However, he did not give the figures of what has happened to the science budget. Although the Government say that it has not been cut in real terms, it has. My figures come from *Nature* of 23 May this year. It talks about the first submission of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils to the Government, which the Secretary of State has placed in the Library. It talks about the amount of science funding made available by the Government over the past three or four years.

Part of the ABRC's difficulty, in this as in previous years, is that the Government appear to have kept the Prime Minister's promise in 1980 that the research budget would be protected. If one uses the retail price index as a measure of inflation, the science budget has increased by 6·4 per cent. since 1981-82. However, even allowing for the decline of the research councils' other income, mostly by way of research commissions from Government Departments amounting to roughly 7 per cent. on one sixth of the total science budget during the same period, the total income of the research councils has increased by roughly 4 per cent. Nobody would argue with those figures, but they do not show the true position.

Nature reports:

"The board says that this simple arithmetic is misleading partly because the retail price index is not a good measure of the increased cost of research. Rather, the board calculates that the real volume of research supported with the funds within its purview has declined by 5 per cent. over four years. Matters have been made worse . . . by the 8 per cent. reduction (in real terms) of the budget of the University Grants Committee."

I think that I have shown how misleading it is to say that the science budget has been protected. *Nature* says:

"The case is sustained by a harrowing account of the changes which have been brought about within the research council system in the past few years. The total staff of the five research councils has declined by a fifth, by 2,000."

Such a cut represents not a minor but a major change in the way in which research is done and funded in this country.

Mr. Maurice Shop, the chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, issued a press release on 21 May which states:

"The Government's policies on finance and student numbers are incompatible with the emphasis on excellence with which the Green Paper"—

on the development of higher education into the 1990s—

"is liberally larded and will undermine the chance of achieving such admirable aims as raising research standards and ensuring an adequate supply of scientists and engineers."

Such chairmen do not say things like that in press releases every two or three months. Indeed, I part company with Conservative Members on this point, because, although they have all regretted the lack of money going into science, they have sought to say that such shortages also occurred under the previous Administration. I admit that certain cuts were made under the Labour Government, but there is a difference in the emphasis placed, and in the amount of cuts that have had to be borne in the past three years. They go far beyond any cuts made in the past 30 years.

I do not believe that the chairmen of prestigious bodies such as the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals would have made such statements in the 1950s or the 1960s, in 1973-74 or 1976-77 or in 1978, but they are doing so now, and that underlines the point that something has gone wrong with science policy over the past three or four years.

The most recent cuts to be applied to the Agricultural and Food Research Council amount to £10 million. Next year they will amount to £20 million. Those are enormous cuts. They have not been made as a result of any long or detailed study into what research should be done, how it should be done and whether it is necessary; they have been dictated by the Treasury. However, with all respect to the Treasury, it is not an expert on agricultural research, and it should not decide by how much research programmes are to be cut.

At present, ADAS costs the country about £122 million. By 1987, the Government intend to reduce that sum by £23·5 million. Indeed, £7 million is to be knocked off research and development. That is in addition to the 15 per cent. cuts of the past three years. Such cuts must be catastrophic for research.

The Welsh Affairs Committee took evidence on the Welsh plant breeding station on Wednesday 14 March 1984. I refer to House of Commons Paper 326. I asked those appearing before the Committee about the F1 hybrid programme at the Welsh plant breeding station and why it was being abandoned. I shall not quote the answer in full, but Dr. Jamieson, the assistant secretary of the AFRC, said in reply:

"There is no question that elements of that programme represent good science but, unfortunately, the position that the Council is in is that, with the budget reductions that we have sustained and are anticipating in the coming years, good science is having to stop at institutes throughout the United Kingdom."

Good science is being abandoned, yet that programme is the only one being carried out in western Europe, although there is something similar in east Germany. It is not being abandoned because of a planned, well-documented and detailed programme of what sort of science we should be doing; cuts have simply been put upon us and there is nothing we can do. We have to behave like a mad butcher in a butcher's shop and lash out in every direction—whatever the knife reaches is cut.

Mr. Dalyell: Six months ago, I saw something of the work on protosynthesis and related problems at the Aberystwyth station. I wish to echo all that my hon. Friend has said. The same problems are faced by the Scottish College of Agriculture, which wrote to me on 10 June.

Dr. Marek: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is quite right. I hope that even at this late stage those in the Government who know something about what will happen if science is decimated will ensure that their voices are heard. If there are to be cuts, they must be rational. There must be a consensus on what should be cut.

Of course, I do not want any cuts to be made. If we are to have the general level of funding that the Government

[Dr. Marek]

want, they should realise that, because of the increases in costs over and above inflation, there must be a little extra money for science.

The Government's claim rings hollow, but they have a chance to put it right. Cuts have fallen heavily on research. Indeed, whole research groups within departments and universities will stop. They will either be enticed to the United States or will be given jobs in different areas where their aptitudes and excellent skills will not be used to their full potential. A new brain drain is developing.

In 1979, research councils reported that all alpha-rated proposals were supported. Now, 25 per cent. fail to get that support and in some councils the figure is as high as 50 per cent. That is serious. However, I shall not labour the point other than to say that I hope that hon. Members will give it serious consideration and urge the Government to do something about it. We have built up our science tradition over the past two or three centuries. That tradition could be thrown away easily in a few years, and it would take a long time to get it back.

What must be done? We must reverse the cuts. All alpha-rated projects must be supported. We need to provide sufficient funding for science so that we do not receive letters like the one I received from the chairman of the CVCP. I could cite other examples, but time is short. We need to provide funds so that, by and large, people in responsible positions — those on various committees, the researchers in universities and so on— can say, "Times may not be as easy as in the 1950s or the 1960s, but we are not having to cut into good science".

Research and development cannot be left to industry alone. That would be a fatal flaw in any Government's policy. I should like to see the Government do more for research and development in the enabling technologies, information technologies, biotechnologies, engineering and manufacturing technologies. It is important to do that. For example, we could allow industrial companies to write off against tax all research and development carried out in previous years, and provide some incentive for companies to innovate. That should be done on the industrial side of research and development. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South, I should like to see research and development doubled in the next three or four years.

On the pure research side, we need to reverse all the cuts in the research councils, and accept what the Advisory Board for the Research Councils is requesting this year. That is the minimum that could be done. There is a place for contract research in universities. The university of Salford has managed to find a modus vivendi with its new financial discipline, but there is no place for pure research simply to be relegated to a philosophy that it can be carried out only if there is an industrial or immediate benefit or spin-off in the near future.

Therefore, I urge the Government to think carefully. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed serious concern about the lack of finance for research. There is a special problem, and special finance must be provided. It is not a special case for a sectional interest in the country. That would be wrong. Hon. Members would misunderstand what I am saying if they thought that that was what I believed. If we do not get it right now, if we do not keep our tradition of pure research, and if we do not spend money on research and development as other countries do, the whole country and every succeeding generation will be affected.

1.16 pm

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): I am acutely aware of the shortage of time and the number of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members who wish to speak. I should like to say without any criticism of any individual that in the first two hours of the debate there were only three speakers, and this is meant to be a private Members' day. Surely we should have been given more opportunity to speak.

I regret the speech made by the right hon. Member for South Down, (Mr. Powell), not simply because much of the research—it is not experimentation, but research—is done in my constituency. It is not a constituency interest of mine, but a genuine opposition to his Bill. However, we debated that before, and today we are debating science.

I entirely agreed with the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) about CERN. I also agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), who made a fundamental and important point. I regret that the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) ruined an outstanding speech by personal offensiveness to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. We are all aging gurus, and what is wrong with that?

As the House knows, in the eight years that I have had the honour to represent Cambridge, I have emphasised beyond anything else the vital link between higher education, jobs and industry. On Wednesday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I gave the Churchill college prizes, which are given to graduates who go into business. That represents one small part of the encouragement that we give, and should give, to emphasise that link between higher education and what is called the real world.

I should like to ask one crucial question: what is the purpose of higher education and research? Let me give my answer. It is the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. It is the love of learning for its own sake. In any institution of higher learning, the important thing is balance. When Prince Albert created the modern university of Cambridge, he did not just introduce the natural sciences. He also introduced the humanities — languages, history and classics. The importance of balance cannot be too heavily stressed. There is often confusion between science and technology, the latter being currently very fashionable, just as there is an absurd differentiation between pure and applied science.

The Green Paper states at the outset:

"The Government believes that it is vital for our higher education to contribute more effectively to the improvement of the performance of the economy."

That is a sentiment with which many of us would wholeheartedly agree. It continues:

"The Government is particularly concerned by the evidence that the societies of our competitors are producing, and plan in the future to produce, more qualified scientists, engineers, technologists and technicians than the United Kingdom."

One agrees with that, too, but the Government's reposnse has been to provide less rather than more. Having correctly defined how we are going wrong, the resolution is negative and the Green Paper is afflicted with a consistently negative and depressing yiew, when it should be positive.

I cite just one example. Hatfield polytechnic is doing virtually everything that the Government wish, and 70 per

cent. of its work and its students are in science, technology and engineering. It receives substantial contracts from British Aerospace, Plessey, the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office and various companies. Yet every year it is cut and cut again. The day before I visited the college, four members of the computer staff had resigned, not just because the salaries offered to them by industry were far greater, but because of a much deeper feeling that higher education no longer had the priority that it deserved.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has done a great deal to help higher education and we are profoundly grateful to him for that. He is not just one of my oldest friends but one of the finest ever Secretaries of State for Education and Science. Nevertheless, I believe that we overlook not only the national but the international aspect of scientific research. Yesterday Cambridge university rightly gave an honorary degree to the founder and director of the United Nations institute in Trieste. That body has exactly 50 per cent. scientists from the developed world and 50 per cent. from the developing world in a highly successful attempt to recognise the international dimension. Our problems may be difficult, but compared with those of the developing world they appear insignificant.

I make one final comment which I hope will not be misinterpreted in any way. The Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), is one of the most deeply respected and liked Members of the House and we all feel for him acutely in his recent personal tragedy. In my view, however, there is a great deal to be said for status and I do not believe that the Minister in charge of higher education, and science should be an Under-Secretary of State. At the very least, he or she should be a Minister of State. That would at least make clear to the world, and especially to the world of higher education, the gravity with which the Governmet recognise the unique role of higher education, and especially of science.

1.24 pm

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): With one notable exception, the Secretary of State must have been impressed by the quality of today's debate. All hon. Members have put a great deal of thought into their speeches. The right hon. Gentleman should be heartened by the increase of knowledge of scientific matters in the House. There has been a steady increase of awareness since he and I first came to the House. Some of us recall science debates when it was difficult to get a quorum. Slowly and painfully we are moving in the right direction.

Scientific organisations have recently been more helpful in enabling hon. Members to understand their problems. The Secretary of State said that we were a science-based society. I wish that he had gone on to say that the vast majority of people have no idea how science and the benefits of it affect the quality of their lives.

I spent most of my industrial career in Imperial Chemical Industries plc, as have four other hon. Members who have spoken. We are lucky, in that we saw science, technology and the application of both to products which were used by mankind. The abysmal lack of knowledge about how science affects our lives is still prevalent.

The Secretary of State said that research feeds off itself. That is true but, unfortunately, in a freely competitive society there are inhibitions because of competition and the need for scientific secrecy. I am referring not to defence research, but to purely industrial research. There has been a regression in the amount of knowledge which is freely available, because of competitive pressures. Will the right hon. Gentleman see whether it is possible to share more scientific knowledge? I know that society is imperfect and that that might not be possible, but it is worth striving for.

It has been said that industrial innovation is Britain's life-blood. George Stephenson, Swan and Faraday were scientists and technologists and understood that their brains could be used. They faced little opposition compared with what their counterparts face today. Because we have industrial innovation, we have had restrictions on the development of industry, projects and commerce through the sheer weight and power of post-war Governments. We must make the public more aware of the benefits of scientific research and development.

Regrettably, we are still sterile in the way in which we apply the fruits of scientific research and development done in this country to overseas commercial markets. Indeed, we are lazy in that respect and often allow other countries to develop the fruits of much of that research.

Because of the shortage of time I shall not raise many of the subjects with which I should like to deal. I must, however, agree with those who have referred to the brain drain. One cannot blame scientists for leaving the country. If we had first-class degrees in science subjects, we might do likewise if we thought that we could secure good salaries and a better standard of living for our families.

Unfortunately, Britain has always adopted a low salary approach to those in science and technology. I fear that that attitude will continue, simply because our society does not recognise their skills. We admire wordsmiths, of whom there are many in the House, but we do not begin to understand the motivation of the scientists. Our education system is not geared to enhance that understanding, despite mammoth efforts that have been made to alter some of our teaching methods.

I am glad that this issue has been raised today. Indeed, we were lucky to obtain parliamentary time on a Friday for this subject. It has been a worthwhile exercise and I look forward to more parliamentary time being allocated to debates such as this, for only by this means can we begin properly to understand the issues involved. Many hon. Members can draw on their experiences to contribute to debates on science and allied matters.

1.32 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): It is a relief after four hours of debate to discover that much has been left unsaid. There has been some wild talk in the debate about science being decimated. I shall follow the example of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) and be positive and specific, but not uncritical.

An enormous amount of research is done in Britain, and science is perceived by the electorate as an important priority. This pre-emptive strike by the Government on the Select Committee's report which will be published next month is an ingenious move, and hon. Members who have spoken today would be advised to read that report when it comes out.

I could not agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), though I hope that all is peaceful in his home this weekend. I suspect that he has been depriving his wife, my Member of the European Parliament, of a large number of votes because of the

[Mr. Robert Key]

many thousands of defence workers in research and development establishments in my constituency and that of his wife.

The funding of science in Britain appears effectively to be determined by the whim of the Treasury rather than by Parliament or even by the Government. What the Treasury describes as "level funding" is, in the words of a distinguished scientist,

"an increase from the previous year by a percentage which is plucked out of the air, and which represents the wildest optimism in estimating the true rate of inflation."

Are the Government telling us that we can no longer maintain our place in the world scientific community and that the time has come for us to target our research on a narrow range of requirements, perhaps commercially led?

Of the amount spent on civil research and development, half is on basic research, and that adds to our fundamental scientific knowledge and contributes to the welfare of the whole economy. But cuts in university funding have fallen more heavily on research capacity than on teaching. There was a 20 per cent. reduction in departmental and laboratory expenditure by universities in the three years after 1981. I am not surprised by the experience of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) in Edinburgh recently.

Universities, which receive over 80 per cent. of their income from public funds, have not been slow to seek new sources of finance, but the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has said that only a small proportion of the 14 per cent. of university income which comes from research grants and contracts can be described as free money, without strings.

Science parks have been another welcome development under this Government. There are now over 40 of them, and more are appearing. Some are successful. Some are well known, but geographical proximity to universities does not always lead to intellectual proximity.

I said that I would be specific, so I must refer to some of the successes at the Porton Down centre for applied microbiology and research, which is administered by the public health laboratory service. A substantial proportion of its work has generated products and processes which are commercially exploitable, and importance has been attached to maximising CAMR's income generation potential.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow mentioned his anxiety about culture collections. Recent developments at Porton have included a new building for a national collection of animal cell cultures, funded by the Department of Trade and Industry. This will provide an internationally recognised patent deposition facility for tissue cultures, for which formal international recognition is being sought.

There are nine constituent laboratories at CAMR pursuing a great deal of important research — the microbial technology laboratory, the vaccine research and production laboratory, laboratories for pathogenic microbes, therapeutic products, experimental pathology, bacterial metabolism research and an experimental microbiology and safety reference library, the molecular genetics laboratory and the special pathogens reference laboratory and, of course, all the usual support services such as electron microscopy, computing and engineering facilities.

Recently, the public health laboratory service has entered into an agreement with Porton International Limited to handle the marketing and distribution of CAMR products and processes worldwide. Porton International has also undertaken to build a new fermentation plant on site at Porton. If that plant had been funded by the DHSS it would have cost the public sector an estimated £16 million. The jobs and the future of that part of the Porton establishment are secure and will grow.

New sources of finance are being sought all the time, and only last week my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development announced his new Overseas Development Administration special scholarship scheme —a partnership between the ODA and the universities— to provide 400 new university places for outstanding students from Commonwealth developing countries. The universities will have to find new money for that in partnership with or sponsorship by local industry and commercial interests within the community.

That is all well and good, but the country is not spending enough on its science budget. I urge the Government to reorder their priorities. I am critical because I want to strengthen the hand of my hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the Cabinet. He will have the support of both sides of the House if he seeks to search for more money from the Cabinet. It will not do to reply with the tired old jibe that there is no money with which to spend our way out of trouble. Even the meanest Poujadist would have to admit that occasionally one has to restock the shelves with new products before opening the shop.

I invite the House to read the words of Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer of the Royal Society and chairman of the UGC, who said in evidence to the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, of which I am a member, on 27 November:

"We are, in effect, in the Red Queen's world — in this country you have to run very fast to stay in the same place. The science budget has an additional snag beyond the difference between the Treasury's assessment of inflation and the truth, which is that by the conventions of accountancy, it has to carry an increasing amount of non-productive expenditure—pensions and all that sort of thing—and so the proportion of the science budget that is spent on producing science is slowly going down."

Sir Peter told the Committee the effect of this:

"We have moved from a system in which the amount of research which the universities could do was controlled by the supply of talent to a system in which it is controlled by the amount of money. More research could be done with the same brains if there were more money. Even level funding is not wholly adequate. Essentially, the proportion of good research which this country does is governed by the proportion of world expenditure on research which is spent in this country. Most other advanced countries are actively increasing in real terms the amount of money they are spending on scientific research— some of them by quite substantial percentages."

We are not. He continued:

"The proportion of the world's science that we do is steadily declining."

There is another side to this. I said earlier that cuts in university funding had fallen more heavily on research capacity than on teaching, and had fallen especially heavily on researchers on fixed-term contracts. We are talking about 10,000 researchers who completely lack career structures or even reasonable security. That has grave implications for the continued success of scientific and medical research in our universities. The people involved are graduates, often of post-doctoral level, who devote themselves full time to scientific and medical research. They are a highly motivated, industrious and

socially responsible group. They are employed on contracts which vary in duration from a few months to five years. Recent cuts in academic staffing in universities have resulted in an increased teaching load on the remaining staff, who have had less time for research and have become increasingly dependent upon contract research staff to pursue their research for them.

I ask the Government whether it is in the national interest to pursue the line with contract researchers. Is it sensible? Was it foreseen or planned, or did it just happen?

I should mention briefly Britain's threatened withdrawal from UNESCO. So far, the public debate—there has been precious little of it—has been long on emotion and short on facts or evidence. I have the honour to be a member of the United Kingdom national commission for UNESCO, which has given me the opportunity to look beyond some of the emotional arguments and to speak to scientists, who make up much of the national commission and who are worried about the lack of public interest in the proposal that we might withdraw from UNESCO. We should stop identifying that organisation with one individual and consider the effects of our withdrawal on the scientific community.

Mr. Dalyell: Not just public interest, but press interest is lacking. I thoroughly support the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Key: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Press interest is lacking, although I believe that some interest is now being shown. The timing is becoming crucial, because if the Government decide on the matter in the autumn they will have the entire summer in which to consider it, a period during which Parliament will not be sitting and will be in no position to advise them.

UNESCO is close to the heart of the Royal Society, which was closely associated with the discussions that led to its foundation in 1946. It was strongly in favour of including science in UNESCO's brief. Indeed, Sir Julian Huxley, the first director-general of UNESCO, strengthened that association from its early beginnings.

It is not generally known, but I am sure that the House would wish to know, that UNESCO has collaborated with many countries and their scientific communities, and with the unions and committees of the International Council of Scientific Unions. That collaboration has been especially beneficial, because it has created strong scientific leadership and much more voluntary work by scientists and non-governmental organisations. Many political problems have been overcome; for example, by ensuring the participation of the most appropriate scientists in projects—including scientists from Israel, South Africa and Taiwan—whatever their nationality. From the point of view of non-governmental organisations, with which the Royal Society has always been closely associated, the collaboration of UNESCO has provided benefits, including the involvement of Governments in scientific programmes, extending contacts in developing countries and providing educational and training activities in support of scientific projects.

Almost no financial case has been made by either side of the argument. That is not surprising, because it is difficult to obtain figures. The figures are such that the Government cannot claim that withdrawal would save money. Nor can the proponents claim that Britain is a net beneficiary. It is much more complicated than that. On its face, it seems simple. In the full two-year accounting period of 1982 and 1983, Britain contributed $17,565,912.

We "received" $38,081,700. This can be broken down in a number of ways. Of the money that we received during the two-year accounting period, United Kingdom nationals at UNESCO headquarters accounted for $19 million. United Kingdom nationals serving as UNESCO experts in the field received over $2 million. United Kingdom nationals serving as consultants received nearly $3 million. There were fellowships for study in the United Kingdom and equipment was procured in the United Kingdom. There were subcontracts with firms in the United Kingdom and fees were paid to the External Auditor, which is a British company. There were allocations to the United Kingdom under the participation programme. Meetings were held in the United Kingdom and insurance was bought in the United Kingdom. All these moneys amounted to the enormous total of $38,081,700.

Our contributions to UNESCO are more complicated, because we claim repayments under currency fluctuations. As the dollar and the pound have fluctuated, so the value of our contributions has changed. In 1984 we should have contributed $4,763,853, but we contributed only $386,664 because of currency fluctuations. There are other problems in calculating the financial benefits and disbenefits, because of staff numbers. It can be said that in the past we have been lucky enough to win on this wicket, but it cannot be said that this will continue, because of the effect of currency fluctuations.

There is the mighty issue of politicisation. The Royal Society said that it considered the Government to be entirely right in drawing attention to the shortcomings of UNESCO, especially those relating to management and undue politicisation. What form does this politicisation take? Do we know? Do we know what the relevant figures are? In subprogramme IV.2, subparagraph 4(b), we see that UNESCO internationally is spending on its total drug abuse prevention programme only $43,000. If we turn to subprogramme II.6, we find that, under

"Education and training activities for national liberation movements",

the granting of fellowships to students sponsored by African national liberation movements and students presented by the Palestine Liberation Organisation led to the allocation of $193,000. We find that the publication of African poems and other activities to be decided upon with those responsible for education in African national liberation movements with a view to helping them preserve cultural identity involved the allocation of $60,000, a sum considerably larger than that given to fund UNESCO's drug abuse prevention programme. Is this a correct ordering of proceedings within UNESCO?

The Royal Society has drawn my attention to another factor. If the United States withdraws from UNESCO, the organisation will be gravely impaired. The impairment will not be limited to a substantial reduction of funding and the withdrawal of United States staff. If United States funds are switched from UNESCO to other international scientific projects, including those of non-governmental organisations, considerable rivalry could be created. It could be that the action of the United States in withdrawing from UNESCO and the switching of its financial support will be, in a manner unbalanced by other countries, regarded widely as just the sort of politicisation which no

[Mr. Key]

one wishes to see in international scientific projects. That is a danger which may face the United Kingdom as well if we withdraw from UNESCO.

I ask that a great deal more attention be paid to the arguments about withdrawing from UNESCO. There should be much more public debate on the issue. The Government are faced with a major decision that will have a profound effect on Britain's scientific community.

1.49 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I think that it is not an overstatement to say——

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Some of us—not only myself but my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) and other hon. Members — have been sitting here since 9.30 am, and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Several hon. Members will be disappointed, but that is in part due to the length of earlier speeches, and I have no control over that.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I was saying that it is not an overstatement to say, as one distinguished academic scientist did at the time of the controversy over the Prime Minister's honorary degree at Oxford, that

"this may be the last chance for any serious academic institution to stop the catastrophe that we face as a scientific and educational nation".

In that respect the debate is timely, for clearly the whole future of our research and development and our standing as a scientific nation are in doubt.

The Government's unwillingness adequately to fund scientific research and development could indeed sever the sinews of our economic strength which is so necessary to sustain our economy as the oil revenues begin to decline. Increasingly, industry is expected—this was reflected in the Secretary of State's speech at the beginning of the debate—to make good the lack of provision of funds for research when its resources are already being stretched by the Government who are asking industry to meet most of the cost of the expanded youth training scheme, and now to make additional contributions to private pension schemes in the wake of the abolition of the state earnings-related pension scheme.

In setting our science budget, the needs of industry are crucial, but they are not absolutely paramount. There must be a proper balance between the investment for society through producing better trained men and women scientists for industry and discoveries which can be exploited for producing new products or breaking into new markets. There is a need also to undertake the kind of pure research the benefits of which cannot be easily quantified.

It is certainly not clear that the Government have got the balance right. Under present academic policies, Galileo may well have been forced to confine his telescope experiments to spotting returning merchant ships rather than discovering the truth about the sun and the earth. We should not go down the road that some have suggested of making massive cuts in basic scientific research in favour of exploiting the inventions of others. That would be a retrograde step akin to winding up many basic manufacturing functions, such as building car engines—recently discussed in this Chamber — in favour of a strategy of assembling already manufactured kits.

Is there sufficient Government commitment and finance behind a policy of strengthening the connection between basic scientific research and industrial innovation? As other hon. Members have said, the value of basic science spending is not easy to quantify, but two statistics strike me particularly forcibly and are most disquieting.

Between 1973 and 1980, the number of publications and citations credited to British scientists fell by 9·9 per cent. compared with rises in West Germany of 3·1 per cent. and in Japan of 29·9 per cent. The number of alpha-rated projects for research funding fell from 85 per cent. in 1979 to less than three quarters of that in 1984. Those figures suggest that there has been a relative decline, at any rate in the recent past, and that is reflected by the Government's failure in reality to maintain their commitment to level funding, as hon. Members have said in the debate.

The projections in the Government's White Paper on public expenditure, taken together with an 8·2 per cent. real fall in spending on higher education since 1980, make the Government's commitment a very hollow one. Research budgets are affected by the general provision for higher education in terms of continued laboratory overheads, a failure to update and replace equipment, vacancies left unfilled, and increased teaching and administrative commitments which staff have to undertake at the expense of research time.

Between 1985-86 and 1987-88, the Government's latest expenditure plans show a reduction of £6·4 million, or 3 per cent. in real terms, in the science budget. In real terms there is an even bigger cut of about £10 million in the budgets of the five research councils and support for the fellowship of engineering. Those cuts, which have been rehearsed by other hon. Members, will have an enormous impact on Britain's capacity in those areas.

As I want to provide an opportunity for other hon. Members to speak, I shall curtail my comments on the scale of the cuts and go on to say that, at a time when the Japanese and American Governments, with other Western countries, are giving much higher priority to research and development, and when other commercial organisations are massively increasing their expenditure in those areas, it is a great pity that Britain cannot do the same.

As a matter of priority, therefore, in my view the Government should establish a new council for science policy combining the current Advisory Board for the Research Councils with the Advisory Council for Applied Research and Development — to be chaired, to ensure that it has the priority that should be accorded to it, by the Prime Minister. This body would guide, monitor and advise on the development of science policy.

There may also be a case for considering whether science should not be removed from the Department of Education and Science into the Department of Trade and Industry, with a Minister of science and technology responsible for these matters in that Department. In my view, that should be considered by the Government.

Resources for science should be expanded to restore the cuts in the real level of activity in our institutions, and expenditure could be determined by the new council that had been established.

The Government should encourage new collaborative ventures between universities and industry, and we also

need much greater collaboration with other European countries—for example, in the application of robotics in manufacturing industry following the recommendations of the working group on technology growth set up at the 1984 London Summit. Nothing has been done to act on that recommendation, and that, plus the other collaborative ventures, should be supported by the Government. I add my voice to those of other hon. Members in support of both the CERN nuclear reactor project and ESPRIT—the European strategic programme for research and development in information technology — which the Government have supported in the past.

I support the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), who spoke about the need to switch much more of our research and development from the military side of the budget to the civil side. Expenditure on military research and development masks the lack of investment in the civil side, and too many of our resources, especially in terms of manpower, are tied up in that area without an adequate spin-off to the rest of the community.

Our difficulty is that, yet again, we are discussing the problems of trying to run a Rolls-Royce system on a pedal-powered economy. This is not the occasion on which to stray down the road of determining what should be the right economic policy, but until the resources are available to the Government we shall not be able to spend anything like the money on research and development and on science that our major competitors in Germany, Japan and the United States are spending at the moment.

1.58 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I realise that I have very little time, which is a great shame, because I speak as a scientist and, as far as I have been able to determine, no scientist has spoken in the debate so far. I spent seven years at university studying science and I thought that I had a contribution to make to the debate, but unfortunately it appears that I shall not be able to do so.

I progressed to being a scientist in a very traditional way. I entered a local grammar school where I studied science. Then I went on to university and later to industry. When I look at the schools in my constituency and see their condition, I come to the reluctant conclusion that we shall not be able to produce good scientists in the future.

I refer to the school that I visited last week—King Edmund's school in Rochford — where demountable classrooms installed 19 years ago as a temporary measure still exist, where flat roofs leak, where ceilings remain broken, where floor tiles will not be replaced and where there is little concern about making the right provision for the children who attend the school. I ask my right hon. Friend how children can be expected to open their eyes wide to the wonders of science and to turn a blind eye to the conditions in which they have to learn.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does my hon. Friend agree that we are concerned not only to hear what he says but even more about the desperate shortage of physics and mathematics teachers in our schools and that we must address ourselves to those problems as well?

Dr. Clark: I agree with my hon. Friend, and I am delighted that another scientist has managed to scrape in just before the end of the debate. He is right, and it is not just a question of physics, a subject in which he is an expert, but chemistry, my subject, mathematics, and the subjects of some of the Labour Members who have spoken today. Unless we do something to ensure that education is attractive to scientists and methematicians, we can write off any contribution that the next generation of youngsters from school might make.

Science is vital to the country and it is amazing that science is tagged off as a small part of the Department of Education and Science. That Department has only three Ministers — the Secretary of State and two Under-Secretaries of State. They are busy enough looking after education. Therefore, I call for science to be given its right place and for there to be a separate Department for science within the Government.

2 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I apologise to those hon. Members who did not manage to speak, and I particularly sympathise with those who have sat through all the debate and not got in, unlike some who have got in although they have not been here all through.

I do not wish to spend a great deal of time dealing in detail with the points made by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). It is now getting to the stage where, every Friday, we debate embryos and one or two ancillary activities. There will be time to go through rebutting in detail all his points. However, nobody has yet claimed that research on human embryos to combat inherited disease is already under way.

Mr. Thurnham: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that no embryo has been kept alive in a test tube for longer than nine days and that the 14 days recommended by the Warnock committee is beyond any work that has been done?

Mr. Dobson: That is true. We should point out to the right hon. Member for South Down that people have been talking only about the prospects for research on human embryos that would counter, and we hope eliminate, a number of inherited diseases. The right hon. Gentleman needs to get things into a proper time scale. It was a long time ago that scientists first managed in vitro fertilisation. There was an enormously long time between that and the first successful impregnation of a woman who finally gave birth to a live child. If people had been asked in the mid-1960s whether worthwhile work could be done on in vitro fertilisation to combat infertility, the answer would have been the same as that which the right hon. Gentleman has been getting from those whom he has asked whether they are undertaking such research. The answer is that they are not, but that they are thinking about it or are drawing up programmes of research for such investigation on other animal embryos. That is the way they go about such things.

There is an element of illogicality in the right hon. Gentleman's position. He is saying that the Bill will not do any harm because there is no such research going on, and we cannot plead the possibility of such research in opposition to the Bill. At the same time, he pleads the threat of that research as the justification for his bill. He cannot have it all ways.

The right hon. Gentleman went on to speak as though he was, for the first time, disclosing the real reason—contraception — for people's concern about the inhibitions on research that might result from the Bill. However, there is nothing new about contraception. Most

[Mr. Dobson]

of the opponents of his Bill have publicly stated that they hope that the research into embryos will make it possible to come up with better, safer and more reasonable forms of contraception. He has not disclosed any deathly secret to an unsuspecting world. This has been talked about in Committee, as he should remember, and it has been talked about in a number of articles in learned journals and not so learned newspapers.

I agree that commercial pressures will be brought to bear—although I am not sure whether they are now—because we live in a commercial society. The way to combat commercial pressures is to recognise that they exist and to do something about them, rather than to abandon all the research. That would be like saying that because some companies may have made a lot of money out of penicillin, pencillin research should not have been pursued because of the commercial threat. However, I agree that we need to keep commercialism out of British medicine and research.

The Secretary of State's speech was almost as infinitely complacent as the recent speech of the Minister for Overseas Development. I know that a basic part of the Secretary of State's political philosophy is that the role of the Government should be extremely limited, and no one could claim that in general his actions are contrary to that belief. Indeed, he seems to have abandoned any responsibility for the fact that there is a brain drain. He said that it was rather sad that many highly intelligent big brains had gone abroad because they could do better, and could carry out better funded research there, but he does not seem to want to do anything about it. He is a bit like the prisoner in the dock who says, "It was not my fault, your Honour. I was just minding it for a friend." One would think that the right hon. Gentleman had no responsibility for positive policies to persuade people to stay in this country or to return to this country from abroad.

The hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) gave examples from his constituency. If we are to have a successful science policy, and if science is to be used successfully in our society, we must look not only at research but at developing a background that is sympathetic to science, to its application, and to a population who have scientific potential. But we are simply not producing enough people with scientific backgrounds——

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it will take us years to recover from the damage done to our educational system and, in particular, to the quality of science education, by the Labour party's headlong rush into comprehensive schooling?

Mr. Dobson: First, I do not accept that, and, secondly, there was a considerable burst of comprehensivisation when the Prime Minister was Secretary of State for Education and Science. The hon. Gentleman can chew what bones he likes out of that.

Damage has been done to our scientific potential in our schools. We need look no further than the latest report of Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools, which states:

"The main problem affecting equipment is the cost of replacing ageing capital items, particularly in the practical subjects, and providing sufficient new technological equipment . . . in about two-fifths of the lessons where the quality of the work was less than satisfactory the supply of books was considered to be inadequate."

The inspectorate gave the example of a school which said that its supply of textbooks was so inadequate that some pupils passed through the fifth form without ever being able to take a textbook home.

Of lessons in both primary and secondary schools that involved the use of equipment, the inspectorate said:

"nine-tenths of the lessons judged satisfactory had adequate supplies of appropriate equipment, while of those lessons assessed as less than satisfactory nearly two-fifths lacked such adequate provision . . . In secondary schools the most serious problem was the replacement of ageing, costly equipment in science".

Those are the facts of the education system for which the Secretary of State is responsible. They do not represent a sound basis on which to develop a scientifically based society. As the right hon. Gentleman well knows, there is concern about increasing the number of women scientists, but we can do that only if more girls begin to take science at school. Those authorities — especially the Inner London education authority — which are taking initiatives to recruit more girls into science, thereby making them more useful in a scientific society, are being inhibited by rate capping from taking such action.

Medical research has suffered seriously from various Government policies. Let us put the matter in perspective. The MRC's budget this year is about £120 million; a new frigate is to cost £170 million. I am not sure that the priorities are right. The Government talk about it as level funding. It might seem level, but the MRC funds have certain special features which are outstripping inflation, so it is far from level funding; indeed, its funding is going down.

That point was proved in a parliamentary answer from the Secretary of State as recently as 7 June. It showed that the MRC assesses projects and gives them an alpha rating if they are top notch and approved as high quality grant applications. In 1981-82, all approved long-term applications received funding. Of the approved short-term applications, 66 were not funded. In 1982-83, approved long-term applications not funded were two, while approved short-term applications not funded were 25. In 1983-84, 22 approved long-term applications — recognised as meritorious — were not funded, and no fewer than 199 approved short-term applications were not funded.

What suffers because of that? One example is important for the 25,000 families — not individuals — affected by the inherited eye disease retinitis pigmentosa. Previously, the MRC had granted £500,000 to Moorfields hospital and the Institute of Ophthalmology jointly for a five-year project — £100,000 a year. That ran out in April this year. It is to be replaced by a three-year grant totalling only £74,000. That measly amount of money, resulting from Government policies, must be compared with the £150,000 that the voluntary organisation, the British Retinitis Pigmentosa Society, is putting into research into the disease.

The Institute of Ophthalmology is one of 12 institutions in the British Post-Graduate Medical Federation. Of the others, the most famous is probably the Institute of Child Health at the Great Ormond street hospital. In 1979-80, those institutes received £9·1 million from the University Grants Committee. This year, in 1979-80 figures, they will receive only £6·3 million. In current prices, during the past six years they have lost £23·5 million for basic, vital research into child health neurology and so on.

The federation tells me that the institute can still obtain money for particular projects, but that their capacity to take them on is being severely undermined because the central core funding from the UGC is no longer available. They cannot run the projects, and that is totally absurd. Senior staff devote a great deal of time to raising money for projects instead of supervising research and carrying out clinical work in the associated hospitals. The institutes are faced with a flight abroad of top flight researchers. They are also faced with the break-up of basic skilled teams of technicians, without whom such institutes cannot prosper. They are also losing money for equipment from the UGC grant.

It is worth adding that those institutes also suffered severely as an accidental result of the Government's policy on overseas student fees. They are so renowned worldwide that they attracted large numbers of overseas students who did a great deal of work here, made a great contribution to those institutions' reputation and spread that reputation abroad, but they are now being turned away and sent to other places abroad.

In all, the Government's record on science policy at all levels is appalling, and it is nowhere more so than in medical research.

2.15 pm

Sir Keith Joseph *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the Secretary of State have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Aye.

Sir Keith Joseph: I pay tribute to the large number of hon. Members who chose to come here today for the debate. On both sides of the House, there seems to be a universal recognition of the relevance of science to prosperity and the standard of living. The Advisory Board for the Reseach Councils has made a strong case in its advice to me, from which I quoted, and which was published yesterday. The Government and their predecessor have protected the science budget in gross terms, but it is true that a significant diversion of some of the budget has had to go to expenditure other than science research.

Dr. Michael Clark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that over the past 15 years Japan has been increasing its science budget by 17 per cent., West Germany by 14 per cent. and France and Russia by 8 per cent., while we have been increasing it by 3 per cent.? If that continues, by 1990 Japan will be spending 16 times as much on science research as we are.

Sir Keith Joseph: I was about to come to that point.

Several hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), my hon. Friends the Members for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren), for Havant (Mr. Lloyd), for Rochford (Dr. Clark) and for Bedfordshire, North (Mr. Skeet), and the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett), spoke directly or indirectly of the economic background. We should recognise what lies behind what they were saying, and what the problem is for any Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford has just emphasised that point. While our productivity remains so far below that of even our neighbours in north-west Europe, let alone America and Japan, our standard of living will be low compared with theirs, what it might be, and what we would like it to be. That goes for public services and social services.

Hon. Members can put the blame for our low productivity and resulting lack of competitiveness on any combination that they wish, on Governments of either or both parties, on management, trade unions or the culture of our times. But let them recognise that until productivity and, with it, competitiveness rise sharply, we shall be in danger of the sort of comparison to which my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford referred. While the proportion of our gross national product devoted to research is not far distant from, and, indeed, above that of some of our competitors, the fact is that many of our competitors' GNP is so much higher that the buying power of the proportion that they devote to research is beyond ours.

We have a real problem in this country. Hon. Members on both sides of the House spoke of the readiness of business to take advantage of scientiic invention. Indeed, that goes to the heart of our difficulty. The function of the entrepreneur has not been recognised enough as being crucial to our standard of living. The culture encouraged to some extent by the Labour party is much to blame for that. I welcome the change in its tone. Labour Members may recognise the importance of business today, but too often in the past they have treated business as if it were in some way discreditable and immoral.

Mr. Thurnham: Could not the Government be more entrepreneurial and put their money where their mouth is by making provision for more specialist teachers, not just to train more engineers and technologists but to ensure better information for the public, so many of whom have followed the ways of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) whose Bill would take us back to the middle ages?

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government do not have any money. We already try to put taxpayers' money to the best use, and this debate is a valuable help in that process. The right hon. Member for Clydeside (Dame J. Hart) asked the key question. We would all like more money for science, but where is it to come from? My hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), in an excellent speech, and the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) asked the same question, and in this context several hon. Members raised the subject of expenditure on defence research and development.

Mr. Dalyell: The Government coughed up £430 million for an airport.

Sir Keith Joseph: I must emphasise that, of the approximately £2 billion classified as defence research and development, only about 15 per cent. goes to research. Opposition Members referred to the United States President's increase of civil research by 30 per cent., but they did not allow for inflation. That was the nominal increase. The increase in real terms was 15 per cent.

Dr. Bray *rose*——

Sir Keith Joseph: I shall not give way because I am right.

Dr. Bray: That is not true. Look at the figure for the universities and colleges.

Sir Keith Joseph: I do not have that. I am referring to general civil research.

[Sir Keith Joseph]

I am glad to say that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has in mind two schemes which would increase collaboration with academic institutions in strategic research. The introduction of those schemes is likely to increase MOD expenditure in higher education. I do not pretend for one moment that that will solve all our problems, but it is a move in the direction urged by hon. Members.

I note the various comments about the decision-making machinery in connection with science. I remind the House that Whitehall Departments co-operate effectively in a number of areas of scientific interest. The House will have noted that contributions were made by several different Whitehall Departments to the expenditure recently announced for the space agency and the switch to larger numbers of science, technology and engineering places in higher education.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James), in a powerful speech, laid strong emphasis on the need for more money for higher education generally, and I sympathise with the view that he expressed.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) —I speak neutrally in terms of the merits of his Bill— told us of his correspondence with various leading figures in the relevant sphere of activity, and I do not contradict what he said. It will not surprise the right hon. Gentleman or the House to know, however, that if his Bill had been law some years ago those specialists could not have undertaken the work that they now carry out therapeutically. Moreover, if the right hon. Gentleman's Bill became law it might inhibit research which experts might wish to put to similar use in the future. I do not comment on the merits of the right hon. Gentleman's Bill but I was surprised that in making, as always, a very effective case he found it necessary to use the phraseology that he did and to refer to a profit-hungry conspiracy. I think that the right hon. Gentleman and I agree that the pursuit of profit within the law, subject to competition and any ethical code which is agreed to, is the driving force behind enterprise and prosperity.

I am also surprised that the right hon. Gentleman thought that his argument needed the denigration not of the judgments and conclusions but of the analysis in the Warnock report. I was further surprised that the right hon. Gentleman, who seldom descends to denigration, thought it right to attack the integrity, as I think he did, of the Medical Research Council and of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

My hon. Friends the Members for Salisbury (Mr. Key) and for Bedfordshire, North spoke of the Government's ingenuity in choosing today for the debate. It was not like that. It was essential that I grasped the chance for a debate on science when it was offered because there is no certainty of getting another date at any time.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short), supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford, rightly emphasised the difficulties of successive Governments in getting suitable teachers in some subjects, especially in the sciences. I ask them both to read carefully my letter of 21 May, copies of which I shall send them, which opened up new possibilities.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) quoted selectively from the inspectors' annual report on the effects of public spending on education. Her Majesty's inspectorate said what he quoted, but it also emphasised that management decisions by several local education authorities meant that money was being wasted in secondary aspects of education, and was thus not available for key education spending in the classroom.

I accept the importance of scientific teaching and believe that, in the Associaion for Scientific Education, we are lucky to have a constructive and effective teaching group. What the Government are introducing by way of a new examination system, the transformation of the curriculum, the improvement of teacher education and the publication of HMI reports——

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Is my hon. Friend aware that, to date, there is only one candidate in the whole country applying to be admitted to a bachelor of education course in physics, compared with 1,454 applicants in physical education? Does he realise the magnitude of the problem that we have discussed this morning?

Sir Keith Joseph: I know only too sadly. I shall send my hon. Friend a copy of my 21 May letter so that he may see the new possibilities.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) based his judgment that all is not well with science on a familiar report which was based largely on citations. We live in a world that has been transformed from the days when we were pioneers in science—and we have to welcome this—there are many countries whose businesses and public services are aspiring to the heights of scientific excellence. We can no longer dominate as we once did when we were pioneers, so it is bound to follow that our record of citations, for example, will diminish.

The ABRC has invited the Royal Society to examine the state of science in Britain today. The Royal Society has accepted the remit and is about to undertake an inquiry into two broad parts of the world of science. When that report is published, taken with the report which the hon. Member for Stockton, South quoted, we shall be able to make a judgment about whether the quality of science in Britain has declined.

Meanwhile, I repeat that I am seriously worried by such evidence as there is of a loss of scientific skills. We do not know the extent to which some British scientists are returning to this country and the degree to which talented scientists from other countries are coming here. A report is pending, and that will tell us more——

It being half past Two o'clock, the motion for the adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish it to be on the record that at least three Conservative Members and three Opposition Members stayed to the end of the debate, would have liked to speak and resent the implication that is often heaped on us that the House of Commons is not interested in science. That allegation at least, can be nailed by the attendance of hon. Members today and by the number who have wanted to take part in the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member has made the point, but he will appreciate that it is not a point of order for me. It is not unusual for right hon. and hon. Members to suffer disappointment because there is not sufficient time for them to be called to speak.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Monday 17th June, the Motion relating to Airports Policy in the name of the Prime Minister may be proceeded with, though opposed, until Twelve o'clock.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Immigration Controls

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): About 200 years ago—it was in 1729—the Irish clergyman and satirist Jonathan Swift put forward a novel solution to the economic problems of that country. He suggested that the poor should turn to baby farming and earn a living by selling their children as fresh meat to British landlords.

In the decades following the second world war, that, in one sense, became a widespread activity, not only in Ireland but in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. The difference was that the human exports from those countries came here and elsewhere not as food but as labour power for the factories of Britain and Europe.

Tory Governments of the 1950s, with the active participation, for example, of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), who is not now in his place, encouraged immigration to provide cheap labour for British capitalism. Throughout the late 1960s and the 1970s, those black and Asian workers were seen as temporary tools for the employers and industrialists of the capitalist class.

As British capitalism declined from the boom of the early 1950s and the 1960s to the recessions and slumps of the 1970s and 1980s, Tory politicians and the media encouraged working people in this country, in particular the unemployed, the elderly and those in receipt of supplementary benefit, to see immigration as the cause of their increasing problems, with talk of floods of immigrants, of the market being swamped and of alien cultures. Notable among those indulging in such talk was the present Prime Minister, who said on the television programme "World in Action" on 30 January 1978:

> "People are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture . . . if there is any fear that it might be swamped, people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in."

Such talk, and the continuing decline of capitalism, fuels the condition in which racism breeds, in which the number of racist attacks increase and in which neo-Nazi organisations can try to spread their poison. It has been reflected recently in the speeches and questions of Tory Back Benchers about the decision of the European Court of Human Rights and in the disgraceful refusal of the Home Secretary and the Government to help Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka seeking asylum in Britain.

Immigrants are not the cause of bad housing, declining living conditions or mass unemployment. In all those categories, black and Asian workers, particularly the young among them, suffer even more than white workers.

In the 1930s there were 3 million without work, yet there was hardly a black face to be seen. Then, as now, the capitalist system proved incapable of organising production in such a way as to provide for the basic requirements of the population and was responsible for mass unemployment and poverty.

In 18 out of the past 20 years, there has been a net outflow of people from this country. Since 1964, 937,000 more people have left this country than entered it. Yet unemployment, in reality, now stands at 5 million. The solution to mass unemployment lies in the unity of workers in opposition to the Government and capitalism.

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

I wish to stress the falsity of the numbers game and the tactics of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office which keep queues long on the Indian sub-continent by having too few entry clearance offices. In a debate two or three weeks ago, we tried to discuss with the Minister a secret document prepared for Ministers at the Home Office which showed that in two significant areas of dealing with immigration for settlement a system of queues operates to regulate the flow of immigrants. It states:

"in the Indian sub-continent (though not elsewhere) applicants have had to wait over two years for interviews. The number of Entry Clearance Officers in practice is the primary regulator of the number of husbands, wives, children and male fiances admitted from the sub-continent in any one year. Provided the queues do not become too long this form of administrative regulation can continue."

In India, Bangladesh and Pakistan there are approximately 17,800 wives, children and elderly dependants waiting for entry visas, according to Home Office estimates. To put that in perspective, if all were allowed to rejoin their husbands, fathers and families in the United Kingdom next week they would represent less than 3 per cent. of the United Kingdom's annual birth rate and still leave a net outflow in the year's migration statistics. If we were to spread such a number equally across all constituencies, the city of Coventry would take an extra 200 people. That would place no real burden on British society.

Time does not permit me to develop those points fully, but only to deal with the effect of the Government's attitude and the way that obstacles and difficulties are put in the way of ethnic minorities who want to visit, let alone stay with, members of their families. It causes long-term disruption to their lives and humiliation, because families are divided.

Legislation — some of it unfortunately passed by a Labour Government — upon which the present Tory Government have built and sharpened immigration laws is based on discrimination against black and Asian workers. The report of the Commission for Racial Equality on immigration control procedures showed that one in 140 blacks and Asians is refused entry to this country compared to one in 4,100 from the old Commonwealth — Australia, New Zealand, Canada and elsewhere. Someone coming from the Indian sub-continent is 30 times more likely to be refused entry than someone from the old Commonwealth. The report spoke of rules and procedures which

"appeared to operate in a climate of racism."

That is true unless one can run 100 m in less than 10 seconds, comes from South Africa and calls oneself Zola Budd. Then, of course, the editor of the *Daily Mail* and the Tory Government would be one's firm friends.

In over 50 cases with which I have dealt I have seen long waits for interviews stretching into years; methods of questioning which bear more relation to the Spanish inquisition than anything that would be expected of normal interviews; and assumptions that applicants are bogus. They must prove their innocence. Justice is turned on its head, in particular in relation to the notorious primary purpose rule on marriages.

I do not have time to deal with each of the Minister's refusals. I shall give an illustration of the primary purpose rule and the way that it is operated by the Home Office. One of the earliest cases with which I dealt was that of an Indian man seeking entry to Britain to marry. The Minister here today said that that marriage was bogus and refused that man the right to enter. The girl had a baby. I asked the Minister whether he was seriously telling me that a woman would have a baby simply to let someone into the country. Since his entry has again been refused, I must assume that that is what the Minister believes. The couple have had a second baby, and are still in exile in Copenhagen. I could repeat that story for dozens of cases in Coventry, for hundreds of cases in the west midlands and for thousands of cases nationally.

Last year, in the Indian sub-continent, 46 per cent. of husbands and male fiancés were refused entry clearance, 88 per cent. of them on primary purpose grounds. Today is our first opportunity to debate the decision of the European Court of Human Rights. The court held that the Tory Government had breached article 8 of the convention and practised sex discrimination. The Minister should say today, without qualification, that that discrimination will be eliminated by giving women in Britain the same rights as men have to be joined by their spouses. There should be no equality of misery or more tightening of the laws. The Government must not remove rights from men and place greater restrictions on the entry of wives. Those families have waited for years to be reunited. Children are growing up not knowing their fathers. What will the Minister tell them today?

Unfortunately, the primary purpose rule has its roots in legislation introduced in 1977 by the Labour Government. It was made explicit by the Tories in 1980, and was further tightened in 1983. We are often told that, under the system of British justice, a person accused is innocent until he is proved guilty. The procedures used in the implementation of immigration law tear that idea to shreds. It is for the person applying for entry clearance to prove his innocence, or to prove that his visit is genuine. In the case of someone wishing to settle with a husband or wife, he or she must prove that the primary purpose of the marriage is not to gain entry to Britain.

That is the most hypocritical and ridiculous criterion. Perhaps the Home Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office should develop a love detector to help immigration officers and entry clearance officers with their investigations. If we were to examine the motives behind the marriages of many Tory Members of Parliament, I am sure that the main one would be money. Equally, I am sure that the Government would not dream of banning marriages between Tory Members of Parliament and their spouses, or between wealthy people in general, on the basis that it would lead to an unfair distribution of wealth.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the British establishment has largely maintained itself through arranged marriages?

Mr. Nellist: That could easily be proved historically. It happens from the royal family down to the present leadership of the Tory party.

The judgments and refusals under the primary purpose rule are even greater than the figures I gave earlier of wives, husbands and families waiting to join people in Britain. According to a written answer given on 29 April, the number of refusals of leave to enter the United Kingdom for husbands and male fiancés from the Indian sub-continent, based on the primary purpose rule, was 970

in 1983 and 1,120 in 1984. The lives of more than 2,000 people have been shattered by the decisions of the Tory Government.

The Government justify the immigration rules for husbands and male fiancés by saying that strictly controlled immigration is necessary, especially at a time of mass unemployment, for good community relations. That is completely bogus. In reality is is part of a conscious plan by the Government to divide, and therefore to rule, black and white workers in Britain. If working people are blaming one another for causing the worst conditions to be found in our capitalist society, for causing unemployment and for being responsible for unfit housing and declining living standards, the real culprits — the Government—get off scot free. Responsibility lies with the Government and the system which they represent.

I am a sponsor and supporter of the West Midlands Divided Families Campaign. The campaign, along with others in the north-west and the London area, demands that changes should be made to alleviate some of the worst aspects of the way in which immigration rules are imposed on families between Britain and the Indian sub-continent.

I shall conclude my remarks by stating some of the demands of the campaign. Some will require only administrative changes — for example, an end to all queues for entry clearance could be achieved by increasing the number of entry clearance officers in the high commissions in the Indian sub-continent. The campaign demands that all independently investigated cases be allowed entry clearance without delay on the basis of village visit reports. It urges that all family cases which have been refused should be allowed now, as independent village inquiries have shown consistently that in the cases refused the number of false applications has been negligible and that the suffering caused to families is unjustified.

The campaign urges that the implementation by the Home Office of the procedural recommendations as outlined by the CRE report should be started forthwith. It demands the establishment of British posts in Sylhet and Mirpur to save family expense and tiring journeys; the end of contacts between entry clearance officers and the Inland Revenue; the end to all investigations into non-applicant relatives, which are used to delay and refuse applications; the end of the use of age assessments of applicants and an amnesty for illegal entrants who have made Britain their home. I would add that compensation should be paid to those who have been deported by the Government.

The campaign demands that applicants should have a right to be accompanied by an independent person who is capable of monitoring interpretation when they attend entry clearance interviews.

I and other Labour Members have said persistently in recent months that tape-recording facilities should be allowed here, at ports of entry and at high commissions in the Indian sub-continent. I do not accept the statement made by the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he concluded his visit to Pakistan and Bangladesh earlier this year. He said that the cost of providing official tape recordings of interviews of a proper standard would be disproportionate to the benefits. When an experiment was conducted in 1978, tape recording was ruled out by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and by the Home Office because of problems of extraneous noise and the difficulties caused by operating with inadequate facilities. It was suggested that a recording of a suitable standard could be produced only by the use of sophisticated equipment in rooms which had been sound-proofed.

If those are the difficulties that have to be overcome before an interview can be recorded on tape, what are the problems of translation and understanding that already exist between entry clearance officers and those they interview? If the questions and answers could not be recorded properly on tape, I suggest that the present system does not allow for a proper understanding of questions, answers and translations.

In a letter to me dated 23 May the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs stated that many people talk softly when they are in strange circumstances and it would be disturbing for them to be asked constantly to speak up. He told me that applicants might be put off by sophisticated recording equipment of the sort that would be needed to produce proper recordings and that much of the value of spontaneity of interviews would be lost. I suggest that it would not be lost to those being interviewed. If people are put off, as it were, by the presence of strange equipment, they are even more put off by the harassment that they suffer by the nature of the interviews that take place, which involve the examination of family trees, age assessments and questions on many other issues. This is the process that confronts those who are trying to join their families.

The west midlands campaign wants interviews to be tape recorded so that the recording can back up accounts of what questions were asked and what answers were given. It demands that documents should be accepted in accordance with civil law and that the burden of proving them insufficient should lie with the immigration authorities. It demands that adjudicators of immigration appeals must be appointed by the Lord Chancellor's office and should include those with legal experience and members of the ethnic minority communities. It demands also that legal aid should be available for all immigration appeals.

The campaign wants various legal changes to be made. It says that the burden of proof should be lifted from the applicant and placed on the Home Office so that it has to disprove a relationship. That is a demand which I have supported in my earlier remarks. It demands that appellants should be present at their own appeals; that no children under 18 at the time of first application should be disqualified from future applications; the abolition of the requirement that men settled after 1973 should be able to support and accommodate wives and children; the abolition of all fees for entry clearance; and the provision under the immigration rules of the same right of family reunion to all residents in Britain as is presently accorded to EEC nationals.

I support every one of the reforms that the west midlands campaign for divided families has put forward, but I have to say to the House—and, more importantly, to those working people outside this Chamber — that the real need is to abolish the racist immigration laws and controls. For that we need a new Government. We need to end the system which supports and allows the conditions which breed racism and enables racist ideas to develop.

A warning needs to be given in the House. While unemployment, particularly among young people and school leavers, is allowed—in fact, designed—to rocket under the Tory Government's economic policies, there will be those in the National Front, the British Movement

[Mr. Nellist]

and other neo-Nazi organisations who will turn to young white school leavers and give them the simple equation, "If we were to get rid of 3 million black people in Britain there would be 3 million jobs for those registered as unemployed."

We have seen the effects of the attempts at recruitment by the neo-Nazi organisations at football clubs not only here but on the continent of Europe. We have seen it in the events of the past month at football matches. This House, the Labour party, and anyone concerned with ending the conditions which breed racism and ending the effects of those conditions, and the immigration controls used by the Tory Government, must explain to young people that there is only one solution. Capitalism, with all its attendant problems of unemployment, bad housing and poor living conditions, has to be abolished. The roots of racism lie in those economic conditions. Socialism must be built in Britain so that all the millions of people, whether black or white, whatever their cultural or religious differences, can live in a harmonious society, free from the conditions that capitalism has imposed, and free from all the racist smears put forward by neo-Nazi organisations and, unfortunately, echoed by hon. Members in this Chamber. It must all be confined where it belongs—in the dustbin of history.

2.52 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): Immigration is an emotive subject. There are always those who are willing to exploit people's fears that an insufficiently tough control will imperil their jobs and the jobs of their children. There are also plenty of people on the extreme Left who see concern about the control among the ethnic minority communities as a splendid opportunity to stir up trouble and create division and conflict in a society the destruction of which they are presumably anxious to hasten.

The House will draw is own conclusions from the diatribe about capitalism with which the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) opened his speech. I do not think that there are many people in Britain who have failed to notice that black people are not queuing to get into Socialist countries such as the Soviet Union. Black people are queuing in their anxiety to get to the West, to get to countries where prosperity has been created and is still being created under the capitalist system. The hon. Gentleman was talking sheer nonsense when he connected his absurd attack on capitalism with immigration control, a subject which deserves serious and not frivolous debate of the type in which he indulged.

The hon. Gentleman's complete ignorance of the whole subject was, incidentally, fully demonstrated by what he said about Zola Budd. I should have thought that everyone in Britain now knows perfectly well that Zola Budd was admitted to Britain and was entitled to come here as the minor daughter of a British citizen father. No power on earth — certainly no power given to any British Government—could have prevented her from coming. We should not display such ignorance and try to confuse her application for naturalisation, which is an entirely different matter, with the question of her right to come here.

The hon. Gentleman was also talking nonsense when he spoke about our "racist" immigration laws. If he had troubled to read the immigration rules he would know that they are applied to all, regardless of race. He would also know that the first effective immigration rule orders immigration officers to carry out their duties without regard to race. He spoke about the number of people refused at our ports of entry and said that more people were refused from some countries than from others. I should have thought that it was patently obvious that more people would try to come here from countries where there was chaos, economic depression and so on than, for instance, from Australia, New Zealand or the United States of America.

It behoves us to discuss these matters calmly and with a bit of common sense, knowing the mischief that can be wrought by intemperance and a complete distortion of the facts such as that indulged in by the hon. Gentleman.

No western Government operate or could operate without immigration control. No doubt many Socialist countries could, because their problem is not to keep people out but to keep them in. But countries in the West, where there is prosperity, have all found it impossible to operate without an immigration control, and without dashing the hopes of many people and telling them that they cannot live in the country to which they wish to come, however much they may want to do so.

I notice from the Order Paper that the title of the hon. Gentleman's debate is "Family reunion", and it should be said at this stage that we, like our predecessors, have recognised that there must be provision in the rules for people already here to be joined by their families. Over the past 10 years, that policy has resulted in the admission of about one third of a million wives and children of men settled here. If the hon. Gentleman took just a moment to read the immigration rules and learned something about immigration control, he would discover that our system of immigration control was biased in favour of the admission of families and that, as a result over the past 10 years we had seen the admission of no fewer than one third of a million wives and children.

The hon. Gentleman complained about the process of entry clearance in the Indian sub-continent. He likes to dissociate himself from the actions of the previous Labour Government, but it is right to remind him that now our effective staff in Bangladesh dealing with entry clearance is greater than the effective staff when the Labour Government were in office. What is more, people do not have to wait as long in the Indian sub-continent for their applications for entry clearance to be heard as they did under that Labour Government.

The hon. Gentleman complained about the refusal of family applications. He must be living in a little world of his own if he does not know that a great deal of fraud has been involved in applications in the Indian sub-continent over the years and that entry clearance officers have always had a difficult job separating truth from fiction. Obviously the entry clearance officers have to judge whether a person is telling the truth, and it is difficult to see how it would be possible to do without a system dependent initially on a judgment made by an individual officer.

However, the decision does not just depend on an individual officer. There is a sophisticated appeals system. Anyone who is aggrieved by the decision of the entry clearance officer can go before an adjudicator, and often he also has the right to go on from the adjudicator to the immigration appeals tribunal.

The hon. Gentleman has made his point about the tape recording of entry clearance interviews. I have not come across very many cases where on appeal there is much dispute about what the applicant and his or her witness said at the original interview. Far more often matters turn on the significance of what admittedly was said. I do not think that this issue can be as important as it is cracked up to be.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Waddington: I am sorry; I cannot give way to the hon. Gentleman, He left me very little time in which to reply. In any event, tape recording in the Indian sub-continent is not a matter for me.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that the judgment of the European Court does not amount to a sweeping condemnation of the Government's immigration policies. On the contrary, the court accepted that the 1980 rules had the completely legitimate aim of controlling primary immigration and protecting the domestic labour market. The court rejected the allegation that there had been degrading treatment, and it also rejected the allegation that there had been discrimination on grounds of race. It also said that there had been no violation of article 8 which protects the right to family life and said that there was no general obligation on a country to allow a couple to settle in that country even though one of them was a national of it. The only violation which the court found was one of sex discrimination, because the rules made it easier for women to join men than for men to join women.

We have already made it clear that we shall abide by the court's decision and make rule changes to bring ourselves into compliance. But there is no question of our allowing our general policy of firm immigration control to be undermined. The hon. Gentleman will have to wait to hear precisely what we intend to do. He will not expect me today to describe to him the detailed——

The Question having been proposed after half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House, without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at one minute past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 3 June 1985

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the right hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Sir William van Straubenzee: No priority written questions have received holding replies.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the right hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many parliamentary questions have been answered by him in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break down these figures into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The total number of parliamentary questions asked during the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session (up to May 1985) are, with the classifications requested, as follows:

Session	*Questions*			
	Oral	*Priority written*	*Ordinary written*	*Total*
November 1981-October 1982	5	11	5	21
November 1982-May 1983	9	7	1	17
June 1983-October 1984	21	14	14	49
November 1984-May 1985	14	3	6	23
Totals	49	35	26	110

Note—The figures relate to questions tabled for answer by the Attorney-General but do not include questions withdrawn or transferred.

* The numbers given are the numbers of oral questions tabled whether or not they were reached. They do not include supplementaries.

† Where a written or a priority written question was initially given a holding reply and later a substantive reply, this has been counted as a single question and answer.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

The Attorney-General: I and the Solicitor-General gave six holding replies to priority written questions tabled for answer by me in Session 1983-84 and four holding replies to such questions during the current Session (to May 1985). This is 4·6 per cent. and 4·7 per cent. respectively of the total number of priority written questions tabled for answer by me in those sessions.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is shown in the following chart.

Parliamentary questions answered by the Attorney-General or the Solicitor-General
(Information based on Departmental records)

	Session 1981-82	*Session 1982-83*	*Session 1983-84*	*Current Session (to 24 May)*
Oral*	55	31	75	39
Priority written†	71	54	130	85
Ordinary written†	169	109	216	96

TGWU (Ballot Rigging)

Mr. Soames asked the Attorney-General if the Director of Public Prosecutions (1) will delay any decision on whether or not to take proceedings in the case of allegations of ballot rigging in the Transport and General Workers Union in Bristol, until after voting has finished in the second ballot for general secretary;

(2) if he has yet received the report of the inquiry into allegations of ballot rigging in the Transport and General Workers Union in Bristol, being conducted by the chief constable of Avon and Somerset constabulary.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions has not as yet received the final police report into these allegations. That report will be considered by the director when it is received in the usual way.

TRANSPORT

Irradiated Fuel

19. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with safety standards for the transport of irradiated fuel.

Mrs. Chalker: The regulations governing the safe transport of irradiated nuclear fuel are based on the stringent standards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. During the 20 years that this material has been transported in this country, there has not been a recorded incident involving death or injury.

M62 (Service Stations)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what date his officials last carried out an annual inspection of each service station between Hull and Liverpool on the M62; and what was the conclusion of their inspection of the telecommunications systems at that time.

Mr. Ridley: The motorway service areas on the M62 were inspected on the dates given in the following table:

Motorway service area	*Date*
Burtonwood	19 April 1985
Birch	10 April 1984
Hartshead Moor	9 July 1984

The Ferrybridge service area was inspected prior to opening on 2 April 1985. At all sites the telecommunications systems were found to be satisfactory.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Ridley: The information is as follows:

	1983-84 Session	*1984-85 Session to date*
Holding replies	52	26
Percentage of total	4·76	4·10

In most cases where a holding reply is given it is because the detailed information requested is not readily available and would take longer to assemble than the time allowed.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is as follows:

	Oral	*Priority written*	*Written*	*Total*
1981-82	382	448	559	1,389
1982-83	234	384	445	1,063
1983-84	497	1,091	1,032	2,620
1984-85*	332	637	571	1,540

*7 November 1984—31 May 1985.
Source: Departmental records.

British Rail (Southern Region)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the scale and speed of stock replacement on the Southern Region of British Rail, especially in respect of carriages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Responsibility for drawing up proposals for the replacement of traction and rolling stock anywhere on the rail network lies with the British Railways Board. Any investment proposal that requires our approval will receive our support if it is consistent with the financial and business objectives we have set the board and offers a sound prospect of improving the finacial position of the railway.

French Government (Cabotage Rights)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he intends to make to the French Government about their continued denial of cabotage rights to British registered ships in spite of the recommendations of the Euro pean Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The European Commission has put to the Council a proposal for a regulation which would, among other things, require all member states to open up their cabotage trades to carriers from other member states. Both when the Council discusses this proposal, and in my bilateral contacts with French colleagues, I shall be stressing the importance which this Government attach to the adoption of such a policy.

Road Safety

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if any arrangements have been made to set up a national scheme for the introduction of traffic clubs for pre-school children, with the aim of encouraging the early development of road safety skills; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I am actively working on possibilities and will make a statement as soon as possible.

Roads (Safety Fencing)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what his aim is in updating existing criteria relating to the provision of safety fencing on dual carriageways and motorways.

Mrs. Chalker: To ensure that decisions on the provision of safety fences are based on up-to-date information.

Trunk Roads (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the reply on 5 April, *Official Report*, column 58, about the proposed trunking of 65 miles of road in London, what is the area referred to in the answer.

Mrs. Chalker: The London area.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many civil servants in his Department and at what grades are currently engaged on work associated with the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils; and what is the total cost.

Mrs. Chalker [*pursuant to the reply*, 20 May 1985, c. *283*]: On 21 May the number of staff working on abolition of the GLC/MCCS in my Department was as follows:

Grade	Estimated full-time equivalents
Grade 3	0·7
Grade 4	0·7
Grade 5	2·3
Grade 6	2·1
Principal	6·7
PPTO	4·1
Statistician	0·9
Senior executive officer	1·0
Higher executive officer/HEOD	4·2
Executive officer/administration trainee	5·3
PTO1	3·2
PTO2/PTO3	2·1
Clerical officer/assistant	4·9
Senior personal secretary	0·9
Personal secretary	3·0
Total	*42

* Does not sum owing to rounding.

The cost, including accommodation, of employing these staff for a whole year would be approximately £1·14 million (1985 prices).

PRIME MINISTER

Alzheimer's Disease Society

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister what representations she has received from the Alzheimer's Disease Society; what reply she is sending; if there is any action she will be taking; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The society wrote to me on 13 May seeking increased financial support from the Government. I have replied offering discussions with officials on how its developing work might best be funded in the future.

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Prime Minister if she will meet the general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing to discuss the report of the review body on nurses pay.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Prime Minister of Grenada

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent meeting with the Prime Minister of Grenada.

The Prime Minister: The Prime Minister of Grenada, the Hon. Herbert Blaize, visited London as the guest of Her Majesty's Government from 18 to 25 May. This was Mr. Blaize's first visit to Britain since taking office following elections in Grenada in December 1984. We discussed a number of matters of mutual interest and, in particular, measures aimed at improving the economic and social well-being of the people of Grenada.

Lindop Report

Mr. Fisher asked the Prime Minister whether she will publish a full list of all sources of potential Government data on identifiable individual members of the public updating the information in appendix 6 of tables 1 and 2 of the Lindop report.

The Prime Minister: Tables 1 and 2 of appendix 6 of the Lindop report do not contain information about the sources of personal data held by Government Departments. Such information is not available centrally and could not be obtained with disproportionate expense. Once the registration provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984 come into effect, however, individual Government Departments will be required to register the personal data which they hold and to describe the sources of their data in the register established under section 4 of the Act which will be available for public inspection.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Nicholson asked the Prime Minister if she will take steps to resolve the conflict of interest between dairy farmers in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom in the matter of distribution of quotas.

The Prime Minister: I recognise that there is a problem about allocation of quota to certain categories of producers in Northern Ireland and Ministers are continuing to address this question.

Mr. Molyneaux asked the Prime Minister when she expects to be in a position to give a considered reply to the letter dated 3 May from the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley, about milk quota equalisation arrangements.

The Prime Minister: I have written to the right hon. Gentleman today.

NHS Hospitals (Private Management)

Mr. Dobson asked the Prime Minister, further to her answer of 20 May, *Official Report* column *276*, to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, whether it is Government policy that review body terms and conditions would apply to doctors and nurses working in any National Health Service hospitals which might be managed by private companies.

The Prime Minister: The pay of nurses and doctors employed in the National Health Service is subject to the recommendations of the review bodies, and their national terms and conditions of service are determined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services following negotiations with the professions concerned. We have no plans to change this and no changes in management arrangements for any NHS hospital could affect the position.

THE ARTS

Parliamentary Questions,

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts (1) how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply;

(2) how many parliamentary questions have been answered by him in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Prior to the 1983-84 Session, the Office of Arts and Libraries was part of the Department of Education and Science. Questions were then tabled to the Secretary of State and cannot be separately identified without disproportionate cost. Since June 1983 the figures are as follows:

	Oral	*Priority Written*	*Written*
1983-84	108	180	70
1984-85 (up to Whit Recess)	54	34	33

In 1983-84 38 priority written questions, or 21 per cent., initially received holding replies. Of these, 30 received substantive replies within one week of the holding reply and the remaining eight within two weeks. In 1984-85, up to the Whit Recess, 10 holding replies have been entered representing 29 per cent. Of these, five received substantive replies within a further week, two within two weeks and the remaining three, within three weeks.

Source: Departmental statistics. It should be noted that the count produced by the POLIS system in the House Library will differ from the above figures, in that on POLIS:

(a) The oral count includes only those oral questions actually reached, plus supplementaries counted as separate questions and

(b) the written count includes Orals not reached, Writtens, Priority Writtens and holding replies all counted as separate Questions.

The overall POLIS count will therefore exceed the departmental count.

Arts Sponsorship

Mr. Freud asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of applications received to date *(a)* under the pound for pound and *(b)* under the 33 per cent. business sponsorship incentive schemes; what percentage of the applications have been awarded less than the amount requested; what is the average time of processing; how much of the £1 million Office of Arts and Libraries contribution remains in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information is as follows:

Number of applications received

	October 1984 to March 1985	*April 1985 to May 1985*	*Total*
1 to 3	74	18	92
1 to 1	—	36	36
Combined	—	23	23
Total	74	77	151

*Percentage of applications awarded less then initially requested**

	Number awarded less	*Percentage of applications per cent.*
October 1984 to March 1985	8	11
April 1985 to May 1985	7	9

* Variations from the sponsorship amount initially submitted reduced the award values in these cases.

Notes:

Most applications are considered and decided within a time-scale of eight weeks.

After allowing for commitments already entered into, £0·5 million is now available for new awards in the remainder of the present financial year.

CIVIL SERVICE

Management Consultants

Mr. Mates asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the contracts, with the subject of assignment, awarded to management consultancy firms by the Management and Personnel Office in 1984, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Hayhoe: The contracts awarded to management consultancy firms during the calendar year 1984 are as listed.

Consultancy firm	*Contract*
Coopers and Lybrand Associates	A study of management-staff communications in the Civil Service
Diane Bailey Associates	Open learning material project on staff reporting and appraisal
Industrial Training Services Ltd.	Measuring Training Activity
Interlogos Ltd.	Pilot follow-up of science and technology recruitment
Latchkey Ltd.	Media aspects of open learning project on staff reporting and appraisal
OD (Management Consultancy) Ltd.	Review of incentive schemes in the Crown Suppliers organisation

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Minister for the Civil Service (1) how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply;

(2) how many parliamentary questions have been answered by him in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is contained in the following table:

	Oral	*Priority written*	*Written*
1981-82	32	21	33
1982-83	31	14	32
1983-84	58	39	27
1984-85*	28	21	43

* Up to Whit Recess.

In 1983-84, no holding replies were given to any priority written questions. In 1984-85, up to the Whit Recess, two holding replies representing 10 per cent. were entered, and were followed by substantive answers within one week.

Source:

Departmental statistics. It should be noted that the count produced by the POLIS system in the House Library will differ from the above figures, in that on POLIS:

(a) the oral count includes only those oral questions actually reached,

plus supplementaries counted as separate questions, and

(b) the written count includes orals not reached, writtens priority writtens and holding replies all counted as separate questions.

The overal POLIS count will therefore exceed the departmental count.

Unions (Meetings)

Mr. Parry asked the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the Civil Service unions; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Hayhoe: On 30 April, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment discussed the question of arbitration with the general secretaries of four Civil Service unions in relation to their 1985 pay claims.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Nicaragua

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what disciplinary action has been taken against any staff in connection with the transmission of information about policy on aid to Nicaragua to hon. Members of Parliament.

Mr. Raison: Following internal inquiries about the unauthorised release to the press of classified Government papers, a probationary clerical officer in the Overseas Development Administration has been suspended without pay pending a decision on the case.

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid Her Majesty's Government are giving to the Government of El Salvador for the financial year 1985-86.

Mr. Raison: British development aid to El Salvador in 1985-86 will consist of about two scholarships in the United Kingdom under technical co-operation, and expenditure on emergency supplies from the grant of £100,000 agreed in 1984.

Overseas Students

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new proposals he has to help more overseas students from developing countries to study in Britain.

Mr. Raison: I propose to set up a new scheme called the Overseas Development Administration shared scholarship scheme (ODASSS). Up to 450 scholarships over five years will be available (up to 50 in the first year and up to 100 a year thereafter). It will be jointly funded by my Department and by those universities and polytechnics which wish to participate. Awards will be open to students from developing Commonwealth countries.

The first awards will be in academic year 1986-87 and I shall seek the appropriate financial provision in due course. The awards will be for those of excellent academic calibre who do not qualify for assistance under existing Government support schemes and who are unable to finance the cost themselves.

The scheme has been drawn up after informal discussions with organisations and individuals concerned with overseas students and higher education in Britain. My Department will be having further detailed discussions with these organisations before the scheme comes into operation.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many of what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The information requested is given in the table.

No of Questions set down for priority written answer where a holding reply was given initially

Session	*Number*	*Percentage*
1983-84	Nil	Nil
1984-85 (as at 24 May 1985)	4	18·2

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many parliamentary questions have been answered by him in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: During the last three complete Sessions and the current Session to date, according to the departmental statistics I have answered 385 parliamentary questions. The breakdown of these questions into oral, priority written and ordinary written is given in the table.

Session	*Oral questions*	*Priority written questions*	*Ordinary written questions*	*Total*
1981-82	57	3	18	78
1982-83	63	5	14	82
1983-84	74	32	41	147
1984-84 (as at 24 May 1985)	45	22	11	78

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the right hon. Member for Taunton, as representing the Public Accounts Commission, how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Sir Edward du Cann: None of the questions tabled for answer by me has received a holding reply.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the right hon. Member for Taunton as representing the Public Accounts Commission, how many parliamentary questions have been answered by him in the last Session, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Edward du Cann: In the last Session I answered six questions, of which one was tabled as an oral question, and five as priority written questions. In the current Session I have answered three questions; one oral and two priority written.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Preferential Assistance

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will update the figures for expenditure on regional preferential assistance given in the answer on 17 January 1984, *Official Report*, column *160-61*, to 1985 and at constant prices.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The expenditure figures provided in the answer on 17 January 1984 have been extended to 1984-85 and put on to a constant 1984-85 price basis in the table that follows.

Expenditure at 1984-85 prices

£ million

Region	*1974-75*	*1975-76*	*1976-77*	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Northern	392·0	474·2	536·2	303·7	287·1	227·5	189·7	208·0	175·8	134·6	122·2
North West	286·0	274·3	233·2	130·8	159·2	133·4	170·3	186·3	135·1	107·0	100·5
Yorkshire and Humberside	51·4	59·0	68·1	61·2	67·6	49·4	67·7	72·9	58·4	37·5	42·1
East Midlands	15·4	7·7	6·3	5·4	7·7	6·5	5·8	10·1	15·0	16·6	10·2
South West	44·0	29·0	26·2	17·1	17·1	16·5	14·9	17·5	17·9	12·6	13·2
Scotland	441·2	637·8	473·1	268·0	266·6	181·5	237·1	259·6	409·3	234·7	181·1
Wales	232·3	257·4	253·4	176·7	190·9	160·5	221·5	233·8	200·5	119·8	140·7
Great Britain	1,462·5	1,739·3	1,596·5	971·6	1,090·2	798·8	915·5	1,006·7	1,011·9	664·7	610·0
Northern Ireland	n/a	n/a	192·3	174·1	203·8	175·9	176·6	127·6	161·3	120·5	134·9

Notes:

Expenditure on a 1984-85 price basis for each year is calculated by applying the appropriate deflator to expenditure at current prices.

Since the Answer on 17 January 1984 there have been minor improvement in the availability of data which now enable the figures for the Northern and north west regions to be given on a standard region basis for the years 1981-82 and 1982-83.

1. All figures are gross and include payments to nationalised industries.
2. Includes west midlands for earlier years.
3. For some years the Great Britain expenditure includes items which cannot be broken down to the regional level.
4. Northern Ireland has a different range of financial incentives available but the figures have been restricted to aids similar to the main forms of regional preferential assistance.
5. Figures for 1984-85 are provisional estimates.

The items included in the expenditure are regional development grants and regional seléctive assistance under the Industrial Development Act 1982, and expenditure on land and factories in the assisted areas by the English Industrial Estates Corporation and the Scottish and Welsh development agencies. Regional employment premium (discontinued in January 1977) has been included for the early years.

Pirate Radio

Mr. Rathbone

asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what actions he is taking to eliminate extra-territorial pirate radio broadcasting.

Mr. Butcher: The unauthorised broadcasting stations currently operating outside United Kingdom territorial waters in the North sea are based on Panamanian register vessels. Their operation contravenes International Radio Regulation 2665 which prohibits the establishment of broadcasting stations outside national territories and Recommendation No. 9 of the World Administrative Radio conference 1979 which calls on Administrations to prevent their operations.

My Department has written to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) about the stations' unauthorised operations. We and the ITU have been in contact with the Panamanian Administration. Since the stations' offices are reportedly based in the United States of America, my officials have also written to and had discussions with members of the United States Administration, drawing their attention to obligations of ITU members and seeking their assistance to remove the stations. At a recent Commission of the European Post and Telecommunications (CEPT) meeting in Italy, we sought the co-operation of all other European Administrations to remove the stations. We shall continue to pursue the matter at the next CEPT meeting to be held in France in June.

The Marine &c. Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967 makes it an offence for anyone in the United Kingdom to supply or promote the stations and for a British national to engage in the stations' operations. When my Department receives information of possible offences it is immediately passed to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, who usually asks for a police investigation before deciding whether to institute proceedings under the Act.

These unauthorised stations interfere with the radio communications of the North sea oil and gas industry and jam frequencies which should be allocated to legitimate radio stations. I am determined, within the resources availavble and the constraints of our jurisdiction, to take all possible action to prevent their continued operation.

EC Tourism Council

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the European Community Tourism Council held on 23 May.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There was no Tourism Council on 23 May, 1985.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Butcher: The information is as follows:

Parliamentary sessions

	1983-84		*1984—24 May 1985*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Number of priority written questions	1,263	—	746	—
Number receiving holding reply	73	6	129	17

Source: Departmental statistics. It should be noted that the count produced by the POLIS system in the House Library will differ from the above figures, in that on POLIS:

(a) the oral count includes only those oral questions actually reached, plus supplementaries counted as separate questions, and

(b) the written count includes Orals not reached, Writtens, Priority Writtens and holding replies all as separate questions.

The overall POLIS count will therefore exceed the departmental count.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many Parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The information is as follows:

Parliamentary Sessions

	*1981-82**	*1982-83**	*1983-84*	*1985—24 May 1985*
Total number of Parliamentary questions answered†	3,170	2,216	3,248	1,657
Comprising of:				
Oral	664	476	518	345
Priority written	1,148	819	1,263	766
Written	1,358	921	1,467	546

* These figures are the combined figures of the Departments of Trade and Industry, which were amalgamated at the start of the 1983-84 Parliamentary Session.

† Questions set down in the Order Paper.

Source: Departmental statistics. It should be noted that the count produced by the POLIS system in the House Library will differ from the above figures, in that on POLIS:

(a) the oral count includes only those oral questions actually reached, plus supplementaries counted as separate questions, and

(b) the written count includes orals not reached, writtens, priority writtens and holding replies all counted as separate questions.

The overall POLIS count will therefore exceed the departmental count.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the quantity of exports of pesticides by product is recorded and available for publication.

Mr. Fletcher: Limited information on pesticides is published under SITC/R2 Group 591 in the United Kingdom Overseas* Trade Statistics. Information on exports of pesticides by product is not collected.

Manchester Steel Company Ltd

Mr. Litherland asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the recent takeover of Manchester Steel Co. Ltd. by Allied Steel and Wire.

Mr. Fletcher: My right hon. Friend will announce his decision as soon as practicable. However, his powers in this case are limited because the steel products concerned are covered by the Treaty of Paris, which gives the European Commission competence on economic and competition issues.

Imports and Exports

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will show *(a)* total imports and *(b)* total exports of (i) cereals and cereal preparations, (ii) all agricultural products, (iii) all other imports and exports, (iv) motor vehicles, (v) electrical goods, (vi) steel and (vii) coal for 1979 and 1984; and if he will, in each case, show the difference between *(a)* and *(b)* in actual and percentage terms.

Mr. Channon: The information is as follows:

Value £ million

	1979				**1984*			
	(a) imports (cif)	*(b) exports (fob)*	*Crude balance £ million*	*as per cent. of (a)*	*(a) imports (cif)*	*(b) exports (fob)*	*Crude balance £ million*	*as per cent. of (a)*
(i) Cereals and cereal preparations	668	264	−404	60	629	993	+364	58
(ii) Agricultural products	6,264	1,814	−4,450	71	8,592	3,260	−5,332	62
(iii) Other	42,160	40,988	−1,172	3	70,113	67,252	−2,862	4
of which:								
(iv) Motor vehicles	2,997	1,519	−1,479	49	4,357	1,485	−2,872	66
(v) Electrical goods	3,643	3,633	−9	0	9,988	7,331	−2,657	27
(vi) Steel	998	1,080	+83	8	1,244	1,288	+44	3
(vii) Coal	136	62	−74	54	493	72	−421	85

Sources: The following SITC/R2 data in the United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics; (i) Division 04, (ii) Sections 0 & 4 and Division 22, (iv) Groups 781, 782, 783 and Sub-group 784.1, (v) Divisions 75, 76, 77 and Group 716, (vi) Groups 672-675, Sub-groups 678.2, .3, .4 and 799.3, and Items 676.01 (part), .02 (part), 679.42, and 791.99 (part), (vii) Sub-groups 322.1 and 322.2.

Notes: (i) Crude balance is United Kingdom exports (fob) less United Kingdom imports (cif).
(ii) 0 signifies a value of less than 0·5.
(iii) *1984 figures are provisional.

Riding Helmets

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what response he has had from manufacturers of riding helmets following his circular letter about adherence to British Standard 6473; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: We have not yet received replies from all manufacturers contacted and the replies so far do not state clear intentions on future compliance with BS 6473. Officials from the Department will be meeting representatives from the trade shortly to discuss the matter. I shall make a statement following that meeting.

Philippines

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the balance of trade between the United Kingdom and the Philippines to the nearest date that is available and for the previous five years;

(2) if he will list the major United Kingdom export categories in volume and value of trade with the Philippines and vice versa for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Channon: Information relating to value only is available, and is as follows:

Table A

Value £m

	Crude balance
1980	−13
1981	−20
1982	−29
1983	−58
1984*	−108
Jan.-April 1985	−41

* 1984 figures are provisional.

Table B: UK exports (fob):

Value £m

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	**1984*
Total	86	86	98	103	92
Main categories:					
Miscellaneous electrical machinery	10	9	13	17	28
Transport equipment (other than road vehicles)	12	12	5	5	9
Miscellaneous metal manufactures	1	2	4	2	5
Machinery specialised for particular industries	8	6	10	21	4
Telecommunications and audio equipment	0	2	0	2	4
Miscellaneous chemical materials and products	2	4	4	3	4
Beverages	2	1	3	4	2
Cereals and cereal preparations	0	2	3	3	2
Organic chemicals	2	4	2	2	2
Photographic equipment, optical goods, watches & clocks	2	3	3	2	2

* 1984 figures are provisional.

Table C: UK imports (cif):

Value £m

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	**1984*
Total	99	106	127	161	200
Main categories:					
Cork and wood	15	22	20	42	46
Miscellaneous electrical machinery	10	13	20	24	41
Cork and wood manufactures (excl. furniture)	9	13	13	24	24
Articles of clothing	14	16	20	17	21
Fruit and vegetables	7	8	8	9	14
Miscellaneous manufactures	2	5	6	6	7
Fixed vegetable oils and fats	4	8	6	5	6
Textile fibres	3	3	4	4	6
Footwear	3	2	5	3	6
Fish and fish preparations	0	3	2	6	5

Source: Tables II (imports) and V (exports) of the UK Overseas Trade Statistics.
Notes:
(i) Information on volume is not available.
(ii) * 1984 figures are provisional.
(iii) O signifies trade of less than £500,000.
(iv) due to rounding the sum of figures in the tables may not correspond exactly to totals given.
(v) crude balance is calculated as UK exports (fob) less UK imports (cif).

Washing Machines and Tumble Driers

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received concerning inducements from Italian state and local authorities to manufacturers of washing machines and tumble driers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I have received no representations in the past two years about state aids to Italian manufacturers of washing machines and tumble driers. I would be pleased to consider any evidence of unauthorised subsidies contrary to the Treaty of Rome.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the estimated share of the British market for washing machines and tumble driers enjoyed by the main British-based producers;

(2) if he will list the share of the British market in washing machines and tumble driers taken by Italian imports for each year since 1975;

(3) if he will list the British-made share of the British market for *(a)* washing machines and *(b)* tumble driers for each year since 1975;

(4) if he will list the percentage of the British market in *(a)* washing machines and *(b)* tumble driers supplied: (i) by British manufacturers and (ii) by Italian manufacturers.

Mr. Butcher: Information on market shares of washing machines is given in the table. Information on market shares of tumble driers is not available as sales by United Kingdom manufacturers are not separately identified.

Share of United Kingdom washing machine market taken by:
(Per cent)

	Manufactures in the United Kingdom	*Imports from Italy*
1975	73	21
1976	72	25
1977	71	25
1978	72	25
1979	72	25
1980	73	22
1981	68	26
1982	68	26
1983	68	27
1984	66	27

HOME DEPARTMENT

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Brittan: The information is as follows:

	Session 1983-84	*Session* 1984-85*
Total number of priority written questions tabled	1,733	900
Number initially given a holding reply	110	65
Expressed as a percentage of total	6·35	6·56

*To 24 May 1985.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: The information according to Departmental records is as follows:

	Session 1981-82	*Session 1982-83*	*Session 1983-84*	*Session* 1984-85*
Oral†	318	229	511	409
Priority written	879	562	1,733	990
Written	1,098	885	1,817	1,076
Total	2,295	1,676	4,061	2,475

*To 24 May 1985.

†Not necessarily reached during Question time. Holding and pursuant replies are counted as separate answers.

Crime Statistics (Manchester)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown of divisional crime statistics for the city of Manchester by offence, recorded and detected, for each year from 1975.

Mr. Mellor: Information about offences recorded and cleared-up by police forces other than the Metropolitan police is available centrally by police force area only. Statistics of offences recorded by each police force are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (table 2.4 of the volume for 1983, Cmnd. 9349). Corresponding information for 1984 was published in table 6 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 6/85 on 12 March 1985.

The number of notifiable offences recorded by Greater Manchester police which were cleared up in each of the years 1975-84 is given in the following table. The number of offences cleared up may be affected by variations in police recording practices. Offences cleared up in one year may include offences initially recorded in previous years.

Number of offences cleared up

	Number
1975	70,700
1976	69,600
1977	71,900
1978	69,200
1979	72,800
1980*	76,300
1981*	85,600
1982*	92,700
1983*	85,500
1984*	69,000

*Figures for 1980 onwards may not be directly comparable with those for previous years because of changes to improve the recording of multiple, continuous and repeated offences.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions there were for damage to municipal property in the city of Manchester in each year since 1975.

Mr. Mellor: Information collected centrally does not distinguish damage to municipal property from other offences of criminal damage.

Police (Injury Statistics)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from each chief constable to show the number of police officers who were injured during the course of their duties in 1984 and 1985 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost and we are not convinced that its value would justify the resources necessary to collect it.

Prisons

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how often each of Her Majesty's prisons is inspected.

Mr. Mellor: Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons and his staff carry out a programme of 14 full inspections and about 50 shorter visits (some of which are unannounced) each year.

Prison Governors

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of service for a prison governor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The average period that prison governors have been in the Prison Service is as follows:

Governor class I—24 years 1 month
Governor class II—21 years 7 months
Governor class III—17 years 11 months
Governor class IV—13 years 11 months

Police Vehicles (Computers)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research is being currently undertaken by the Home Office scientific research and development branch into the possible use of computers in police vehicles.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Home Office scientific research and development branch is not currently undertaking research into the possible use of computers in police vehicles but a study of the cost-effectiveness of mobile data terminals is expected to start during the next 12 months.

Transport and General Workers Union

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has asked the chief constable of Somerset and Avon constabulary to delay the submission of his report on allegations of ballot rigging in the Transport and General Workers Union in Bristol, until after voting has finished in the second ballot for general secretary.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Water Cannon

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what injuries have been sustained by people participating in tests of water cannon by British police; and in what circumstances.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that in 1982 a police cadet suffered an eye injury during evaluation of a mark 4 water cannon borrowed from the Federal German authorities. He made a full recovery. No other injuries have been reported.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the possible use of water cannon by British police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Since 1 January 1984 my right hon. and learned Friend has received about 40 letters from members of the public about the use by the police of water cannon in situations of public disorder; 11 hon. Members have written to him.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what tests of water cannon have been carried out by British police forces; whether there are plans for future tests; and what conclusions have been drawn about the possible use of water cannon by British police;

(2) what makes of water cannon have been tested for possible use by British police forces.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In 1982, two Daimler Benz mark 4 water cannon were borrowed for six months from the Federal German authorities for examination by Home Office scientists and the police. Two prototype British vehicles, built in this country under contracts awarded by the Department, are held by the Metropolitan police for evaluation. Tests to establish their suitability for public order use have not yet been completed.

National Reporting Centre

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what national exercises requiring co-ordination of police activity would require the reopening of the national reporting centre.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The national reporting centre comes into operation when it is necessary for it to co-ordinate responses to requests for assistance from chief officers of police. The centre has not been opened for the purpose of national training exercises.

Remanded Persons

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were on remand in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is on the number of persons proceeded against in 1978 to 1983 who were remanded and is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (tables 8.4, 8.7 and 8.9 of the volume, for 1983, Cmnd. 9349).

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people remanded in custody were subsequently found to be innocent by the courts in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the number of untried persons who were received into prison department establishments and subsequently found not guilty or not proceeded against is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (table 2.4 of the latest volume for 1983, Cmnd. 9363). Information on the

outcome of proceedings for those remanded in custody is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (tables 8.6 and 8.11 of the latest volume for 1983, Cmnd. 9349).

Mercenaries (Recruitment)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce measures to prevent the recruiting of mercenaries in Britain to fight against the Government of Nicaragua.

Mr. Mellor: We have no present plans for legislation relating to mercenaries. The United Kingdom is playing a full part in the United Nations ad hoc committee on the drafting of an international convention against the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries.

Reading Prison

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with security and staffing levels at Reading prison.

Mr. Mellor: We are not aware of any major weaknesses in security at Reading prison, but recent press allegations about drug trafficking and misuse are being investigated. My right hon. and learned Friend has recently announced an increase in the number of prison officers to be recruited. This is intended to ease staffing problems at local prisons such as Reading.

Road Safety (Westminster)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the road safety aspects of the unmarked crossing between St. Stephen's entrance and St. Margaret's churchyard.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I am informed that the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis takes the view that, provided normal care is exercised both vehicular and pedestrian traffic should at all times be able to negotiate the crossing safely. A police officer takes up a position at the crossing for about eight to 10 minutes when a Division is called in order to halt traffic for hon. Members proceeding to the House.

Immigration Control Procedures

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the two questions which the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington), referred to on 23 May, *Official Report*, column 1172, as appropriate for immigration officers to ask in cases which may subsequently lead to the implementation of the primary purpose rule will be asked in every case; and if he will give examples of answers to these questions which will result in *(a)* acceptance and *(b)* rejection.

Mr. Waddington: Entry clearance officers will adopt the position set out in the Divisional court's judgment in Vinod Bhatia. They will ask appropriate questions about the relevance of the sponsor's residence here to the purpose of the marriage. As the determination of the immigration appeal tribunal in the same case stated, if the applicant states flatly he would not consider marrying the girl if it meant living in his own country, this will usually be fairly conclusive in determining the primary purpose was to obtain admission.

Murder Statistics

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been convicted of murder since 1955 after ending the life of a close relative or friend in seriously ill health; and if he will list the range of sentences which were imposed for these offences.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The available information is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", in tables 4.4 and 4.8 of the volume for 1983 (Cmnd. 9349).

Terrorism

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts in each of the police areas of metropolitan London, Dumfries and Galloway and Merseyside have been charged with offences under the Acts or under other Acts, separately, between 11 November 1974 and 31 December 1984.

Mr. Brittan [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 may 1985, c. *573-574*]: The available information for the Metropolitan police district, Merseyside, and Dumfries and Galloway on persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Acts and subsequently charged relates only to the period from 1 January 1979 and is given in the table.

Detentions under the prevention of terrorism acts, and subsequent charges

	1 January 1979—31 December 1984		
	Detained	*Charged under Prevention of Terrorism Acts*	*Charged under other Acts*
Metropolitan police district	471	13	44
Merseyside	433	17	11
Dumfries and Galloway	589	36	6
	1,493	66	61

ENERGY

Energy Efficiency

5. **Mr. Hayward** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what part voluntary insulation groups have to play in his energy efficiency drive.

Mr. David Hunt: Voluntary sector insulation projects play an important and growing part in my right hon. Friend's energy efficiency strategy. They provide a direct injection of energy efficiency into a section of the population which would not otherwise be able to achieve this improvement.

Coal Industry

7. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current level of output and employment in the British coalfields.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am encouraged by the levels of production attained since the end of the strike, although damage to coal faces has had a lasting effect. Between the beginning of March and 4 May, over 2,000 miners took voluntary redundancy, reducing the number of men on colliery books to approximately 169,000.

Gas Flaring

17. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking further to reduce the level of gas flaring in offshore oil fields; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I will continue to maintain tight control.

Management Consultants

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the contracts, with the subject of assignment, awarded to management consultancy firms by his Department in 1984, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department awarded one contract to Armitage Norton Consultants in 1984. It was asked to assess the markets for the energy efficiency industry, the factors inhibiting its growth, and its potential for development.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Peter Walker: During the Session 1983-84 only two priority written questions were initially answered with a holding reply. This represents less than ½ per cent. of the total number of priority written questions tabled to me during this period. No holding replies have been given during the current Session.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Departmental statistics on parliamentary questions are not available before the 1982-83 Session and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The information requested from the 1982-83 Session onwards is as follows:

	Numbers			
	Priority written questions	*Ordinary written questions*	*Questions tabled for oral answer*	*Total*
1982-83 Session	184	177	286	647
1983-84 Session	472	458	433	1,363
1984-85 Session (up to and including Friday 24 May)	256	245	235	736

Source:
Departmental statistics. The number for ordinary written questions does not include questions tabled for oral answer which were not reached.

Nuclear Safeguards Assignments

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he raised the matter of nuclear safeguards assignments in the context of the forthcoming non-proliferation treaty review conference during his recent visit to the United States of America.

Mr. Goodlad: No.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Students

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the number of students in *(a)* universities and *(b)* maintained sector advanced education, expressed as full-time equivalents.

Mr. Brooke: In 1983-84 the provisional total full-time equivalent student load in universities in Great Britain (excluding the Open University) was 304,800. The total full-time equivalent number of students in public sector higher education in Great Britain was 333,300. These two measures are not directly comparable because of differences in ways of converting part-time students into full-time equivalents.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the number of overseas students in *(a)* universities, *(b)* maintained sector advanced education and *(c)* non-advanced further education, for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Brooke: The information is as follows:

Students from abroad: Great Britain

	(Thousands)									
	1974	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Universities	27·8	31·2	33·7	35·2	36·5	34·9	33·2	31·8	30·9	32·2
Public sector higher education	11·7	16·9	21·2	22·4	22·1	20·9	19·7	18·6	15·1	13·8
Non-advanced further education	21·6	26·8	27·7	27·5	27·1	26·6	19·5	11·1	8·1	7·9

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the number of students

in *(a)* universities, *(b)* maintained sector advanced education and *(c)* non-advanced further education, for each of the last 10 years; and what proportion were full-time and what proportion were part-time.

Mr. Brooke: The available information is as follows:

Students in universities and public sector higher education in Great Britain and non-advanced further education in England
Total numbers and percentages full-time and part-time

	1974-75	*1975-76*	*1976-77*	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
Universities Great Britain*										
Total numbers (000s)	274·7	286·3	297·8	307·7	316·5	322·7	330·6	333·4	328·9	326·3
Percentage of which										
Full-time	91·2	91·3	91·3	91·2	91·1	90·7	90·3	90·0	89·8	89·4
Part-time	8·8	8·7	8·7	8·8	8·9	9·3	9·7	10·0	10·2	10·6
Public sector higher education Great Britain										
Total numbers (000s)	363·1	376·7	378·8	383·6	379·7	385·3	410·8	433·6	452·6	474·5
Percentage of which										
Full-time	65·0	64·4	63·8	61·4	57·6	56·5	54·1	55·8	57·0	57·7
Part-time	35·0	35·6	36·2	38·6	42·4	43·5	45·9	44·2	43·0	42·3
Non-advanced further education England										
Total numbers (000s)	†1,583·4	†1,643·8	1,519·1	1,486·7	1,572·0	1,482·1	1,454·7	1,467·5	1,504·7	1,578·3
Percentage of which										
Full-time	†13·8	†14·9	17·8	18·6	18·3	19·5	20·4	22·3	23·6	21·8
Part-time	†86·2	†85·1	82·2	81·4	81·7	80·5	79·6	77·7	76·4	78·2

* Excluding the Open University.
† Estimated.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the age participation index for students in full-time advanced further education in each country in the European Community.

Mr. Brooke: The information in the form requested is not available. Comparisons of participation indices in higher education between countries are influenced by the structure of higher edcuation in each country, in particular by the age of entry and the length of course. In some EC countries students enter higher education later than in the United Kingdom and take longer to qualify.

A meaningful comparison can be obtained by showing new entrants of all ages to higher education as a percentage of the age group within a "typical age range". The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has published statistics on this basis.

The new entrant figures for the United Kingdom exclude students from abroad and also any known to have obtained already a higher qualification, such as postgraduates, graduates entering PGCE courses or teachers on in-service training. It is not known whether other countries have limited their data in this way; certainly for Italy and the Netherlands, all first-year students are the basis.

The following table shows the latest data available.

*New entrants to higher education as a percentage of the relevant age group**

Country	*Year*	*All higher education per cent.*	*Non-university† only per cent.*
France‡	1982	29·0	8·1
Germany	1982	21·2	6·3
Netherlands‖	1982	26·0	16·7
Belgium ¶		. .	. .
Denmark	1980	32·7	18·2
Spain	1980	28·3	10·6
Italy‖	1981	25·1	•. .
Luxembourg■		. .	. .
Ireland		. .	. .
Greece		. .	. .
United Kingdom*	1983	26·7	17·5

. . Not available.
* Average of age groups normally corresponding to entry to higher education.
† Defined by each country based on their own classification of higher education, and therefore not fully comparable.
‡ Excludes new entrants to the "Grandes Ecoles". Data on non-university type education refer to UIT (University Institute of Technology) and higher technicians only.
‖ First-year students.
¶ In 1981 the percentage for universities only was 12·9.
• Minimal; in 1976, 4 per cent. of first-year students entered non-university higher education.
■ Higher education students mainly study outside Luxembourg.
* Includes part-time students. Excludes students from abroad, and also any known to have obtained already a higher qualification, such as postgraduates. Excludes private sector and entrants to nursing diploma courses.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many postgraduate students there are in universities, broken down into numbers of home and overseas students; and what are the equivalent figures for each of the last 10 years;

(2) how many postgraduate students there are in maintained sector advanced education, broken down into the numbers of home and overseas students; and what are the equivalent figures for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Brooke: The information is as follows:

Postgraduates: Great Britain (000s)

	Universities			Public sector higher education		
	Home		Overseas	Home		Overseas
	Part-time	Full-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Full-time
1974-75	21·0	31·8	16·0	*	*	*
1975-76	21·5	32·6	17·2	*	*	*
1976-77	22·5	32·3	18·0	8·4	11·0	1·1
1977-78	23·4	30·8	18·1	9·3	9·8	1·2
1978-79	24·3	30·6	17·7	11·6	9·8	1·5
1979-80	25·9	30·2	17·5	11·6	11·6	1·4
1980-81	27·4	31·1	16·5	12·3	12·1	1·4
1981-82	28·2	30·8	16·1	13·3	12·1	1·4
1982-83	28·3	29·5	15·9	13·8	10·5	1·3
1983-84	29·0	30·6	16·9	14·0	10·8	1·3

* Not available.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the comparable unit cost in universities and maintained sector advanced education for each year since 1978-79 in cash terms and in cost terms at 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Brooke: Average unit costs for the different sectors of higher education are not readily comparable because of the different mix of subjects in each sector and the different financial years in which they operate. A paper on funding comparisons across the sectors of higher education was published in May 1985 entitled "Higher Education: Comparisons of Funding Across Sectors." It covers the financial years 1980-81 to 1986-87. No similar analysis is available for earlier years. Copies of the paper are in the Library and I am sending one to the hon. Member.

Universities

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the equivalent of tables 3.10.5 and 3.10.4 in the Public Expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9428) for universities only.

Mr. Brooke: Following are the tables requested:

University participation indices (GB)

Percentages

	Age participation index (API)	Qualified participation index (QPI)	Young mature entry index (YMEI)	Older mature participation index (OMPI)
1980-81	7·5	50·7	2·6	0·052
1981-82	7·4	48·1	2·3	0·051
1982-83	6·9	43·7	1·9	0·048
1983-84	6·6	40·6	1·8	0·048
1984-85 (provisional)	6·9	41·9	n/a	n/a

University home student numbers (GB)

	Actual			Provisional
	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	†1984-85
Full-time and sandwich				
Undergraduates (000s)	238	235	229	226
Of which; admissions (000s)	75	72	70	71
Postgraduates (000s)	31	29	31	31
Age participation index (per cent.)	7·4	6·9	6·6	6·9
Part-time				
Total (000s)*	33	34	35	Not available

* Excluding the Open University.

† The figures quoted for 1984-85 are early estimates of actual student numbers. They should not therefore be compared with the projections in Cmnd. 9428 of students numbers in 1984-85 for higher education as a whole.

No projections for university numbers are shown. As recorded in Cmnd. 9524 (para 3.8) the Government have asked the advisory bodies to consider the optimum distribution of students between sectors in the medium and longer terms.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many university applicants there were in each year since 1978-79; and how many candidates were finally accepted in each of those years.

Mr. Brooke: The information is as follows:

Applicants and acceptances through the Universities' Central Council on admissions scheme for universities in the United Kingdom

	Applicants	Acceptances
1978	157,506	80,530
1979	166,362	82,398
1980	168,354	84,695

	Applicants	Acceptances
1981	167,096	80,341
1982	171,496	77,752
1983	172,738	74,860
1984	173,674	77,431

"International Years" (Funding)

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funding his Department has given in each year since 1979 to *(a)* international year of the child, *(b)* international year of the disabled and *(c)* international youth year.

Mr. Dunn: The information in cash terms is as follows:

International Year of the Child (1979):

	£
1979-80	13,120
1980-81	1,880

International Year of the Disabled (1981):
The Department has made none; the Government's main financial contribution has been channelled through the Department of Health and Social Security.
International Youth Year (1985):
Grant aid to the International Youth Year National Co-ordinating Committee for England.

	£
1982-83	1,350
1983-84	25,000
1984-85	107,500
1985-86	115,000

Grants for various projects being undertaken by youth organisations—£26,000.

In addition, the Department has supported and pursued a range of more general initiatives, projects and developments related to each of these international years.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information requested is as follows:

Session	Number	Percentage
1983-84	18*	2·4
1984-85†	29	6

* Best estimate based on the information readily available.
† Up to and including 24 May.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information requested is as follows:

Parliamentary Questions

Session	Oral	Priority Written	Ordinary Written	Total
1981-82*	456	596	518	1,570
1982-83*	328	370	322	1,020
1983-84	603	750	779	2,132
1984-85†	343	483	437	1,263

* In the Sessions 1981-82 and 1982-83 the Office of Arts and Libraries (OAL) was part of the Department of Education and Science. Parliamentary questions on the arts were tabled to the Secretary of State for Education and Science and are therefore included in the figures for these Sessions. The OAL transferred to the Cabinet Office in June 1983 at the beginning of the 1983-84 Session.
† Up to and including 24 May.
Source: Departmental Statistics.

Barley Yellow Dwarf Virus

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science at which Agricultural and Food Research Council research station work is being undertaken on barley varieties' resistance to barley yellow dwarf virus; and what proposals he has for the future of such research.

Mr. Brooke: I understand from the Agricultural and Food Research Council that work on the breeding of spring and winter barley varieties resistant to barley yellow dwarf virus is currently being undertaken at the Plant Breeding Institute and the Scottish Crop Research Institute with an input from the Welsh Plant Breeding Station which identify sources of disease resistance. Continuation of this commissioned research will be determined in the light of advice from the Priorities Board on Research and Development in Agriculture and Food about the allocation of available resources.

Further work on the characterisation, epidemiology and control of cereal viruses, including barley yellow dwarf virus, is being carried out at the Long Aston research station and Rothamsted experimental station. Work on these programmes will be continued for the foreseeable future.

Teachers (Salary Dispute)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he proposes to answer the letter of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) written in February 1985 concerning the teachers' salary dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: A reply has been sent today.

Higher Education (Expenditure)

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will express expenditure on higher education as a percentage of gross national product in each of the last 10 years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Brooke: It is more realistic to express such expenditure as a percentage of the gross domestic product. The following figures have been calculated accordingly.

*Expenditure on higher education as percentage of GDP**

	percentage
1974-75	0·9
1975-76	1·0

	percentage
1976-77	1·1
1977-78	1·0
1978-79	1·0
1979-80	1·0
1980-81	1·1
1981-82	1·0
1982-83	1·1
1983-84	1·0

* Expenditure figures are based on universities in Great Britain, while those for the public sector are based on England only. The GDP is calculated on a United Kingdom basis.

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will express expenditure on higher education as a percentage of total public sector education expenditure in each of the last 10 years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Brooke: The information requested is as follows:

England:
Expenditure on higher education as percentage of total public education expenditure

	Percentage
1974-75	17·9
1975-76	19·1
1976-77	22·6
1977-78	22·7
1978-79	22·8
1979-80	23·7
1980-81	24·1
1981-82	23·9
1982-83	24·4
1983-84	24·2

Degree Courses

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of 15-year-olds in secondary school have proceeded to a first degree course in the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Brooke: Information is not readily available in the form requested. The Department's usual way of monitoring participation in higher education is the age participation index. This is defined as the number of full-time and sandwich home initial entrants to higher education aged under 21 expressed as a percentage of the average population of 18 and 19-year-olds. Initial entrants are those entering a higher education course for the first time and exclude those entering a second such course.

The index for Great Britain since 1974, with later years based on the most recent information, is as follows:

	Percentage
1974	12·2
1975	12·3
1976	12·4
1977	12·3
1978	12·3
1979	12·5
1980	12·7
1981	13·5
1982	13·5
1983	13·3
1984	*13·7

Note: Entrants to initial teacher training courses with less than two A-levels are excluded.
* Provisional.

ENVIRONMENT

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide details of the £7,744,018 expenditure in 1984-85 by the Crown Suppliers on its vehicle fleet in respect of *(a)* expenditure on cars, *(b)* expenditure on other vehicles, *(c)* departmental allocations, *(d)* purchasing and disposal arrangements, *(e)* numbers of vehicles in each taxation class and *(f)* the percentage of British-made vehicles in each taxation class.

Sir George Young: A breakdown of the £7,744,018 expenditure in 1984-85 by The Crown Suppliers on its self-drive fleet and the other information requested is as follows:

(a) Approximately £2,865,000 related to cars.
(b) Approximately £4,879,000 to other vehicles.
(c) Fourty-seven vehicles are operated by the Crown Suppliers, 2,197 are hired to PSA and 922 to other Government Departments and to other public sector bodies, which for commercial reasons are not detailed.
(d) Vehicles are purchased under the rules of Government procurement, by tender, using central contracts. Vehicles are disposed of by auction when they have completed the useful economic 'life', defined in the case of cars as 5½ years or 55,000 miles, and in the case of other vehicles in relation to their use.
(e) Records of vehicles by taxation class are not maintained.
(f) Records are not maintained by taxation classes but the percentage of vehicles obtained from British manufacturers in the total fleet is 99 per cent.

Council Houses

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of council houses being built in each of the 32 London boroughs.

Sir George Young: The numbers of dwellings which the London boroughs and the Greater London council had reported as being under construction for them at the end of 1984, appear in table 1*(a)* of "Local Housing Statistics" No. 73: a copy is in the Library. Subsequently, Hounslow and Newham have reported, respectively, 123 and 474 dwellings under construction at that time.

Urban Programme

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what account was taken on allocating funds for the urban programme *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Waltham Forest in each year since 1979 of (i) inflation, (ii) the increase in the number of self-help groups and voluntary organisations, (iii) the consequences of the rise in the number of the unemployed and (iv) restrictions on local authority spending; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Resources for the urban programme have risen from £93 million in 1978-79 to £338 million in 1985-86. Funding for voluntary sector projects in 1984-85 is estimated to account for £70 million of UP expenditure. No automatic allowance is made for changes in inflation or unemployment, although residential unemployment rates are taken into account in the policy of concentrating resources in the most needy areas. The urban programme is not intended to offset or undermine the Government's call for economies in local authorities'

overall spending. In common with other undesignated authorities, the resources available to Waltham Forest depend on the quality of bids submitted for traditional urban programme funding.

Multiple Occupation

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the total number of control orders made on houses in multiple occupation by local housing authorities in England and Wales during the most recent year for which statistics are available; and if he will list the local housing authorities concerned.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not collected by my Department but the Environmental health report for 1982, which is the most recent one published by the Institution of environmental health officers, indicates that 17 control orders were made that year.

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local housing authorities in England and Wales which operate registration schemes for houses in multiple occupation under the Housing Act 1961 to 1969.

Sir George Young: The local authorities in whose areas registration schemes for houses in multiple occupation have been confirmed are as follows:

Informatory schemes
Birmingham city council
Bournemouth borough council
Cardiff city council
Crawley borough city council
Croydon London borough council
Gloucester borough council
Kingston upon Hull city council
Leeds city council
Liverpool city council
Middlesbrough borough council
Mole Valley borough council
Trafford borough council
Reigate and Banstead borough council

Regulatory schemes
Exeter city council

Combined schemes
Bradford city council
Brent London borough council
Bristol city council
Cambridge city council
Camden London borough council
Doncaster borough council
Enfield London borough council
Greenwich London borough council
Hackney London borough council
Islington London borough council
Kirklees district council
Lambeth London borough council
Lancaster city council
Leicester city council
Lewisham London borough council
Manchester city council
Milton Keynes borough council
Newcastle upon Lyme borough council
Newcastle upon Tyne city council
Newham London borough council
Norwich city council
Oldham borough council
Portsmouth city council
Redbridge London borough council
Rotherham borough council
Salford city council
Sandwell borough council
Scunthorpe borough council
Sheffield city council
South Tyneside borough council
Southwark London borough council
Stoke on Trent city council
Swansea city council
Tower Hamlets London borough council
Walsall borough council
Wycombe district council
Wyre borough council

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of his research project on houses in multiple occupation and in particular *(a)* when he intends to make available the findings of the postal survey of local housing authorities in England and Wales in connection with the project and *(b)* when he will be able to complete the project and report on its conclusions.

Sir George Young: The research project is in three parts: a postal survey of all local authorities in England and Wales; a pilot physical and social survey in three local authority areas involving some 50 houses in multiple occupation; and a full physical and social survey in about 40 local authority areas of at least 500 properties. Reports on the postal and pilot surveys are due to be submitted to my Department shortly. I hope to announce a summary of the results during the autumn and to publish a detailed account before the end of the year. The full survey has not yet started; it will not be completed until the summer of 1986 and publication of the results will not be possible until the winter of 1986-87.

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the implications of his proposals "Home Improvement — A New Approach" for the improvement of conditions in houses in multiple occupation.

Sir George Young: The Green Paper includes several specific proposals for improving the conditions of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). It suggests a new system of mandatory grants for installing basic amenities and providing means of escape from fire and fixed fire precautions. Other improvements and repairs would attract equity sharing loans.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how the additional sums available for voluntary organisations in the event of abolition of the Greater London council and metropolitan counties will be disbursed; and if any part of such sums will be made available for voluntary organisations in the London borough of Waltham Forest.

Sir George Young: We will make proposals in a consultation paper shortly. The scheme will apply to the London borough of Waltham Forest.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants in his Department and at what grades are currently engaged on work associated with the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils; and what is the total cost.

Mr. Waldegrave: The latest available information, which relates to 1 March, was set out in my right hon. Friend's answer to the hon. Member on 4 April at columns *762-3*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the legatee responsibilities of the London residuary body.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to clause 60 of the Local Government Bill as sent to the House of Lords on 29 March 1985, and to section 2·27 of the Yellow Book issued in July 1984.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest date the London residuary body will be expected to notify successor authorities of its proposed charges and levy.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Clause 72 of the Local Government Bill requires each residuary body to issue its levy demand to the rating authorities not less than twenty-one days before the beginning of the financial year to which the levy relates. I would, however, expect each residuary body to notify successor authorities of its proposed charges and levies well before that date.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what finance functions will need to be carried out by the London residuary body acting on behalf of other successor authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: These will be matters for the successor authorities and the London residuary body to decide.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total cost of the consultants' studies of the proposed residuary bodies;

(2) what firms of consultants were considered for the study of the proposed residuary bodies.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member on 22 May 1985 at columns *437* and *438*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the considerations taken into account in deciding to employ consultants to appraise the proposed residuary bodies.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what finance functions would need to be continued without any intervening break by the London residuary body if the Greater London council were to be abolished.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Those in support of responsibilities conferred on the London residuary body under part VII of the Local Government Bill—in particular clause 56 (debt), clause 57 (compensation), clauses 58 and 59 (pensions), clause 60 (residual property, liabilities, etc.), and clause 61 (preparation of final accounts)—together with such other tasks as it may assume on behalf of successor bodies.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how the cost of the consultants' studies on the proposed residuary bodies will be allocated to successor authorities;

(2) how the cost of providing support to the proposed residuary bodies until their formal establishment is to be allocated to successor authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: These costs will be borne by my Department. They will not be allocated to successor authorities.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to announce the arrangements for the delegation of his powers to nominate tenants to former Greater London council housing, in the event of the Greater London council being abolished;

(2) when he intends to make an order conferring on the Secretary of State nomination rights to former Greater London council dwellings in the event of the Greater London council being abolished.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement on these matters later in the year.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest date before 31 March 1986 by which staff of the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils will be advised that their services are not required by successor authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: GLC and MCC staff still in those councils' employment immediately before the abolition day will be left redundant, unless either they have been designated in an order under clause 51 of the Local Government Bill; or they have received an offer of new employment to which clause 53 would apply.

All successor authorities are under a duty by virtue of clause 54 to decide what staff they will require and to make timely offers of employment. They will also be expected to notify staff designated for transfer to them under a clause 51 order. The residuary bodies will also be required to take early steps to assess their staffing needs and inform those staff whose services they will require.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in the initial calculation of grant-related expenditure assessments and targets for the London residuary body.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The residuary bodies will not have grant related expenditure assessments or targets.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment at what date the boroughs will receive notification of that part of their expenditure target which will be in respect of the expenditure of the London residuary body; and how he will calculate and apportion the targets in respect of the London residuary body.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No decisions have yet been taken on the future of targets after 1986-87.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what arrangements he intends to make to provide the Inner London education authority with computer-based information on the condition and maintenance of its buildings after the abolition of the Greater London council on 1 April 1986;

(2) what are his plans for the future of the current analysis and dissemination of data relating to London traffic accidents carried out jointly and co-operatively by the Metropolitan police and the Greater London council computing service for the London boroughs;

(3) what are the comparative costs associated with providing computing services to the successor bodies after the abolition of the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what level of savings on the use of information technology he expects to accrue to London's ratepayers after the abolition of the Greater London council on 1 April 1986;

(5) what arrangements he intends to make for the Greater London council's welfare benefits computer project after the abolition of the Greater London council on 1 April 1986;

(6) what arrangements he intends to make to provide the London Fire Brigade with mainframe computer facilities after the abolition of the Greater London council on 1 April 1986;

(7) if he will make a statement on the future application of information technology across the range of London's public services after the abolition of the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement;

(8) what progress he is making with measures to ensure the maintenance of computer services currently provided by the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement;

(9) what progress he is making towards ensuring that successor bodies are adequately provided with computing facilities, following the abolition of the Greater London council;

(10) whether he has any plans for providing computing services for the Inner London education authority and the other residuary bodies following the proposed abolition of the Greater London council;

(11) what he intends to do with the computing facilities maintained by the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my hon. Friend gave him on 23 May 1985 at column *505*. The residuary body will be able to provide computer facilities to ILEA and where there is a demand for this to other successors on a recharging basis until permanent arrangements can be made for the dispositon of computer facilities.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he intends to take reserve powers to ensure that all residuary bodies will be able to advise successor authorities on their grant-related expenditure allocation of all the necessary charges and levies that need to be included in successor authorities' 1986-87 budgets;

(2) how the expenditure of the proposed residuary bodies which will count as expenditure by successor authorities will be identified; and what is the timescale involved.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Residuary bodies will charge the successor authorities for the services they render to them. Net expenditure by the residuary bodies not otherwise covered will be met by the residuary bodies' levies, which will be subject to the same timetable as precepts by upper tier authorities. I have no intention to take the reserve powers the hon. Member proposes.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he intends to make to replace the information technology training facilities provided at present by the Greater London council after the abolition of the Greater London council on 1 April 1986

Mr. Kenneth Baker: It will be for successor authorities to decide whether or not they wish to continue to provide these facilities after abolition, and in what form.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the volume of radioactive waste likely to arise as a result of decommissioning a civil Magnox and advanced gas-cooled nuclear reactor power station.

Mr. Waldegrave: The CEGB has estimated that decommissioning a typical 500 MW(e) Magnox reactor will give rise to about 14,000 m^3 of low-level waste at the stage of dismantling plant external to the reactor biological shield and about a further 13,000 m^3 of low-level waste and 7,500 m^3 of intermediate-level waste in subsequent dismantling of the biological shield and remaining plant (stage 3).

The corresponding figures for a typical 1,300 MW(e) AGR are 4,500m^3 of low-level waste at the earlier of these stages, and 5,200m^3 of low-level waste and 6,500m^3 of intermediate level waste at the later stage.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the approximate volumes of radioactive waste currently stored at each of the civil nuclear installations in the country, including the reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Mr. Waldegrave: The general practice is to dispose of low-level wastes as they arise. Approximate volumes of stocks of other wastes in January 1985 are given as follows for each nuclear installation. These figures are based on information of stocks in January 1984 and estimates of arisings during 1984 which have been agreed between my Department and NIREX:

	M^3	
BNFL		
Sellafield	27,500	Intermediate-level waste
	1,165	High-level liquids
Springfields	1,360	Uranic residues
Capenhurst	660	Uranic residues
CEGB Stations: Stocks of intermediate-level wastes		
Berkeley	1,400	
Bradwell	320	
Dungeness	320	
Hartlepool	20	
Heysham	20	
Hinkley Point	900	
Oldbury	260	
Sizewell	230	
Trawsfynydd	370	
Wylfa	25	
SSEB Stations		
Hunterston	1,760	
Torness	Zero	
UKAEA Sites		
Dounreay	780	High-level liquids
	450	Miscellaneous solid intermediate level wastes
Harwell	80	Intermediate-level wastes
Winfrith	320	Intermediate-level wastes

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The information is as follows:

	Session	
	1983-84	*1984-85 (to date)*
Total number of priority written questions answered	2,166	1,220
Number of holding replies issued	66	92
Number of holding replies issued, as a percentage of the total number of questions answered	3·04	7·54

Source: Departmental Statistics.

It should be noted that the count produced by the POLIS system in the House Library will differ from the above figures in that on POLIS:

(a) the oral count includes only those oral questions actually reached plus supplementaries counted as separate questions and

(b) the written count includes orals not reached, writtens, priority writtens and holding replies all counted as separate questions.

The overall POLIS count will therefore exceed the departmental count.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The information requested is as follows:

	Session			
	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85 (to date)*
Oral questions	398	314	673	297
Priority written questions	1,063	609	1,986	1,220
Ordinary written questions	1,050	755	1,915	937
Total	2,511	1,678	4,574	2,454

Source: Departmental Statistics.

It should be noted that the count produced by the POLIS system in the House Library will differ from the above figures in that on POLIS:

(a) the oral count includes only those oral questions actually reached plus supplementaries counted as separate questions and

(b) the written count includes orals not reached, writtens, priority writtens and holding replies all counted as separate questions.

The overall POLIS count will therefore exceed the departmental count.

Housing Defects Act

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities which responded to his circular 9/85 inviting bids for additional allocations in respect of the Housing Defects Act by 31 May.

Mr. Gow: The following local authorities have responded in the terms set out in the circular:

North
- Blyth Valley borough council
- Gateshead metropolitan borough council
- Newcastle upon Tyne city council
- North Tyneside metropolitan borough council
- Sedgefield district council

North West
- Hyndburn borough council
- Lancaster city council
- Preston borough council
- South Ribble borough council
- Trafford borough council
- Wigan borough council

Yorkshire and Humberside
- Barnsley metropolitan borough council
- Boothferry district council
- Bradford metropolitan borough council
- Calderdale metropolitan borough council
- Doncaster metropolitan borough council

Grimsby borough council
Hull district council
Leeds city council
Wakefield metropolitan borough council
York city council

East
Chiltern district council
East Herts district council
Epping Forest district council
Hertsmere district council
Huntingdonshire district council
Luton borough council
North Hertfordshire district council
Norwich city council
St. Albans city council
South Bedfordshire district council
Southend on Sea borough council
Stevenage borough council
Tendring district council
Three Rivers district council
Thurrock borough council

South East
Basingstoke and Deane borough council
Cherwell district council
Eastbourne borough council
Eastleigh borough council
Hart borough council
Reigate and Banstead borough council
Rochester upon Medway borough council
Southampton city council
Wokingham district council

South West
Bristol city council
Caradon district council
Carrick district council
Christchurch borough council
Exeter city council
Gloucester city council
Kennet district council
Kingswood district council
North Cornwall district council
North Wiltshire district council
Plymouth city council
Restormel district council
South Hams district council
South Somerset district council
Stroud district council
Taunton Dean district council
Teignbridge district council
Tewkesbury borough council
Torbay borough council
Wansdyke district council
West Dorset district council
West Somerset district council
West Wiltshire district council
Weymouth and Portland borough council

Greater London
Ealing borough council
Harrow borough council
Havering borough council
Redbridge borough council
Waltham Forest borough council

West Midlands
Birmingham city council
Cannock district council
Dudley metropolitan borough council
East Staffordshire district council
Hereford city council
Nuneaton and Bedworth borough council
Redditch borough council
Sandwell metropolitan borough council
Shrewsbury and Atcham borough council
Stafford borough council
Staffordshire Morlands district council
Stoke on Trent city council
Wolverhampton metropolitan borough council
Wychavon district council
Wyre Forest district council

East Midlands
Chesterfield borough council
Gedling borough council
Kettering borough council
Newark and Sherwood district council
Northampton borough council
North East Derbyshire district council
North Kesteven district council
Rushcliffe borough council

ILEA (Adult Education)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the grant-related expenditure assessment for the Inner London education authority takes into account vital adult education provision.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Yes.

Public Sector Housing

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many public sector housing starts he anticipates in 1985; and what was the comparable figure for 1979.

Sir George Young: The 1979 figure appeared in table 2 of the Department's housing statistics press notice released on 7 May: a copy is available in the Library. My Department has made no estimate for 1985.

Home Renovation Grants

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the full results of the distribution of grants inquiry into home renovation grants before the end of the consultation period on "Home Improvement—A New Approach" (Cmnd. 9513).

Sir George Young: It will not be possible to publish the full results of the English distribution of grant inquiry before 9 July but we plan to publish them in the autumn. However, annex 1 to the Green Paper has already set out the main findings is some detail.

Royal Parks

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in regard to royal parks *(a)* their number, location and acreage, *(b)* the expenditure incurred by the Government in the financial year 1984-85 on the maintenance, repair and improvement of each park, *(c)* any income received in the financial year 1984-85 for each park and *(d)* the names and addresses of any consultants or agencies involved in work affecting each park, giving brief descriptions of jobs involved and details of the terms of reference, date of completion and any fees due to be paid beyond the current financial year.

Mr. Macfarlane: There are nine royal parks. The information requested is as follows:

Park	Acres	Hectares	Works/Supplies Expenditure 1984-85 £	Income 1984-85 (estimated) £
Central Parks			2,906,889	396,100
Hyde	343	139		
St. James's	86	35		
Green	52	21		
Kensington Gardens	285	116		
Regent's (including Primrose Hill)	400	162	1,897,176	158,035
Hampton Court and Bushy Parks	1,748	708	1,418,606	210,170
Richmond	2,359	955	745,676	93,514
Greenwich	195	79	787,742	30,267
Not specific to individual parks	—	—	487,176	114,200
TOTAL	5,468	2,215	8,243,265	1,002,286

Consultants currently engaged in work affecting parks (excluding design consultancies let by the Property Services Agency) are as follows:

1. Land Use Consultants, 731 Fulham Road, SW6.
Historical Survey, Greenwich Park, report due late 1985.

2. Land Use Consultants
Preparation of exhibition material in respect of Fountain Garden at Hampton Court. Completion expected summer 1985.

3. Consortium of Inbucon Ltd, 197 Knightsbridge, SW7 and Land Use Consultants Study of standards of maintenance, their resource implications, and options for future maintenace of royal parks. Feasibility report based principally on study of Regent's Park due Autumn 1985.

No fees will be incurred on 1 and 2 in 1986-87. Further expenditure on 3 depends on the outcome of the feasibility study.

Royal Festival Hall

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the reasons for the delays in giving consents for the following concerts at the Royal Festival Hall: John Williams on 18 May 1986, Bach Choir on 29 May 1986, City of London and Brompton Choral Society Choirs on 8 June 1986, Murray Perahia on 23 May 1986, RAF Anniversary Concert on 11 April 1986, Youth Makes Music on 17 April 1986, Philharmonia Orchestra on 21 April 1986 and the Royal Philharmonic Society on 16 April 1986 and 14 May 1986.

Mr. Waldegrave: Consent under sections 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 has been given for the holding of concerts at the Royal Festival Hall on numerous dates including 16, 17 and 21 April 1986, 14, 18, and 29 May 1986 and 8 June 1986.

I am not aware of any outstanding application for consent for concerts to be held on these dates, nor on 11 April or 23 May 1986.

Elderly Persons (Dwellings)

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* single storey and *(b)* flat dwellings for the elderly have been completed in each of the last 10 years for which statistics are available.

Sir George Young: This information is not collected centrally.

Endangered Species

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the decisions taken by the committee meeting under the European Community convention on international trade in endangered species regulations; and what formal or informal agreements have been reached by the committee on any other matters.

Mr. Waldegrave: As with other committees of this nature, the committee's proceedings are confidential. Any regulations, directives or decisions on the implementation within the European Community of the convention on international trade in endangered species are published in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities. I refer the hon. Member in particular to the editions of the *Journal* dated 31 December 1982, 7 December 1983, 28 December 1983, 3 March 1984, 6 March 1984, 7 March 1984 and 26 May 1984.

Homes Insulation

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which English councils have applied for sums additional to their initial allocation under the homes insulation grant scheme; and what proportion of the reserve has now been allocated.

Sir George Young: To date the following local authorities have applied for additional allocations from the homes insulation scheme reserve:

Northern
Langbaurgh
Middlesbrough
Stockton-on-Tees*

Yorkshire and Humberside
Beverley*
Cleethorpes
Scarborough
Sheffield*
Calderdale*
Kirklees*

East Midlands
Amber Valley
Erewash*
Blaby
Melton*
North Kesteven
Corby
Wellingborough
Ashfield
Broxtowe
Nottingham

Eastern
South Bedfordshire
Chiltern
South Bucks
Basildon
Castle Point
Harlow
Southend-on-Sea
Tendring
Broxbourne
Dacorum
St. Albans*
Stevenage
Welwyn Hatfield
Breckland
Norwich
Babergh*
Forest Heath
Ipswich*
St. Edmundsbury*
Waveney

Greater London
Bromley
Ealing
Lambeth*
Redbridge*

South East
Bracknell
Windsor and Maidenhead
Rother
Wealden
Basingstoke and Deane
Eastleigh
Fareham
New Forest
Winchester
Medina
Ashford
Canterbury
Dover*
Gillingham*
Maidstone
Sevenoaks
Tunbridge Wells
Vale of White Horse
West Oxfordshire*
Elmbridge
Guildford
Reigate and Banstead
Spelthorne
Surrey Heath
Waverley*
Woking
Adur
Arun
Horsham
Mid Sussex
Worthing

South West
Carrick*
Christchurch
North Dorset*
Wimborne
Stroud*
Taunton Deane
Kennet

West Midlands
Bromsgrove*
Hereford
Leominster
Malvern Hills
Redditch
Worcester
Wychavon
Bridgnorth
Shrewsbury and Atcham
The Wrekin
Cannock Chase
Lichfield
Newcastle-under-Lyme*
Nuneaton and Bedworth*
Warwick
Coventry*
Dudley

North West
Fylde*
Hyndburn
Rossendale*
Wyre*

* These authorities have applications still under consideration or have been invited to reapply when it is clearer that their existing allocations will soon be exhausted.

Some 22 per cent. of the reserve has been allocated.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in respect of grants given by the voluntary services unit of his Departments, if he will list (i) the unit's current organisational structure, complement of posts, staff in post and grading of posts of staff employed on assessing, monitoring and advising on these grants, (ii) the value of grants approved for 1985-86 and (iii) details of the name, address, type and purpose of the organisation and the amount granted, for each grant made in the financial year 1984-85.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My Department does not have a voluntary services unit. Staff administering direct grants to voluntary organisations work in a number of policy directorates and their work is usually combined with other responsibilities. All grant awards for 1985-86 have not yet been decided. In 1984-85 the Department awarded direct grants to voluntary bodies, excluding housing associations, under the following programmes.

Organisation	*Amount (£)*
1. *Special grants programme 1984-85*	
Advisory Committee on the Education of Romany and other Travellers	11,460
Advisory Committee on Pollution of the Sea	2,500
Association of Community Technical Aid Centres	12,000
British Association of Social Settlements and Action Centres: Innovatory Urban Projects Booklet	9,200
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	100,000
Byways and Bridleways Trust	4,000
Cathedral Camps	10,000
Centre for Social Enterprise	15,000
Child Accident Prevention Trust: Child Accidents and the Built Environment	4,650
Civic Trust: Urban Initiative Project	19,000
Community Links	5,500
Community Regeneration	18,118
Community Service Volunteers: Watts Labor Community Action Committtee	20,000
Conservation Foundation	25,000
Conservation Trust	8,250
Council for Environmental Conservation	32,600
Council for Environmental Education—Youth Unit	4,000
Council for National Parks	7,620
Directory of Social Change	9,850
East Anglian Gypsy Council	936
Ecological Parks Trust	14,200
European Centre for Urban Regeneration: Urban Regeneration Directory	10,000
Federation of Resource Centres	600
Friends of the Earth Trust	15,000

Organisation	Amount (£)
Free Form Arts Trust	20,000
Gingerbread: Housing Officer	9,270
Help the Aged and Shelter: Care and Repair	14,000
Horticultural Therapy: Garden Advisory Project	15,475
Inter-Action: i. Country Wings	20,810
ii. Neighbourhood use of Buildings and Space	21,410
International Waterfowl Research Bureau	2,000
Kennet and Avon Canal Trust	5,000
Law Centres Federation: Inner City Development Officer	18,000
Macclesfield Groundwork Trust: Voluntary Sector Data Base Project	5,100
NACRO: Neighbourhood Remedial Action Project	32,500
National Association for Environmental Education	7,500
National Advisory Unit for Community Transport	17,523
National Council for Voluntary Organisations:	
i. Ethnic Minorities: Training Unit	30,782
ii. Neighbourhood Energy Action Urban Initiatives Project	5,150
iii. Secondment to BIC	15,233
iv. Urban Unit	56,280
National Federation of City Farms	12,800
National Gypsy Council	13,330
New World Business Services: Ethnic Minority Training Project	2,500
North East Civic Trust	7,000
Northern Region TCPA: Community Technical Aid Centre	32,573
North West Civic Trust	24,500
North West Civic Trust—Vacant Buildings Information Service	16,462
North West Pollution Control Advisory Service (Campus)	10,000
Open Spaces Society	4,500
Pennine Heritage	23,000
Planning Aid Unit (TCPA)	15,000
Policy Studies Institute: Local Authorities Race Relations Information Exchange	10,000
RIBA: Architectural Workshops	23,000
RIBA: Community Projects	46,000
Romany Guild	6,990
Royal Society for Nature Conservation	41,135
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds: Urban Schools Officers	7,950
Rural Preservation Association	11,536
Shelter National Housing Aid Trust: Mobile Homes Unit	6,250
Somerset Small Industries Group	8,000
Sports Aid Trust:	
i. Employment of Book-keeper	4,500
ii. Employment of a Fund Raiser	8,000
Streetwork: Council for Urban Studies Centres	14,185
Town & Country Planning Association:	
i. Conway Project (Birkenhead)	12,033
ii. Lightmoor Project (Telford)	8,500
iii. Management Grant	25,000
Tree Council	13,000
UK Sports Association for People with Mental Handicap	19,750
URBED: Re-use of Industrial Buildings Service	26,250
Volunteer Centre:	
i. Inner City Volunteer Bureaux	11,775
ii. Printing of Conference Report	800
Wildfowl Trust	2,600
Wildlife Link	8,000
William Temple Foundation	8,500
World Wildlife Fund: Youth Education Work	18,000
Young Peoples Trust for Endangered Species	21,900
2. *Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977*	
SHAC—The London Housing Aid Centre	124,000
Shelter National Housing Aid Trust	44,984
Housing Advice Switchboard	49,500
CHAR—Campaign for the Single Homeless	28,000
National Association of Voluntary Hostels	19,000
National Cyrenians	26,000
National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders	11,420
First Key	12,000
UJIMA Housing Association	1,280
Empty Property Unit	15,500
Tyneside Housing Aid Centre	12,300
3. *Keep Britain tidy group*	510,000
4. *Council for Environmental Education*	42,000
5. *Amenity Societies and the civic trust*	
Civic Trust	55,000
Council for British Archaeology	3,250
Ancient Monuments Society	6,500
The Georgian Group	6,500
The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings	6,500
The Victorian Society	6,500

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, in respect of the traditional urban aid programme and the inner city partnership schemes, if he will list (i) his Department's current organisational structure, complement of posts, staff in post and grading of posts of staff employed on assessing, monitoring and advising on these grants, (ii) the value of grants approved for 1984-85 and (iii) details of the name, address, type and purpose of the organisation and the amount granted for each grant made in the financial year 1984-85.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The structure and staffing of inner cities division 2 and the urban policy sections of the Department's regional offices which deal with these matters were published in the management information system for Ministers 5 (MINIS 5). A copy was placed in the Library of the House. Since then the detailed administration of the traditional urban programme has passed to the regional offices. The latest estimate of outturn for expenditure in 1984-85 by partnerships is £128 million, and £46·5 million for the traditional urban programme. Specific grant is paid on all expenditure at the rate of 75 per cent. Several thousand projects receive support and the details are not readily available in the form requested.

Rent Acts

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be in a position to announce the outcome of his Department's review of the Rent Acts.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Construction gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) on 13 March at column *144*.

Surplus Land

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much, in percentage terms, of Government-owned surplus land is being managed or disposed of by in-house resources, such as the Property Services Agency, and how much by the private sector.

Sir George Young: PSA appoints private sector agents to handle all significant open market disposals of civil and MOD surplus properties for which it is responsible.

Most private treaty sales for example to other public bodies or former owners are dealt with in-house in conjunction with the district valuer. No figures are available of the percentage of the total these represent.

Until disposal is effected, day to day management is carried out by PSA, in-house.

Housing Stock

Mr. Litherland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to prevent those vulnerable parts of the national housing stock from further deterioration and ultimate demolition.

Sir George Young: The Government's policies are designed to safeguard the condition of the housing stock, and to give priority to those houses in the worst condition. The Green Paper "Home Improvement — A New Approach" (Cmnd. 9513) includes new proposals for improving private sector housing, including the suggestion that mandatory grants should be extended so that they are available to deal with unfit houses wherever renovation is appropriate and the owner meets the proposed eligibility test.

Mr. Litherland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken by Her Majesty's Government to prevent the construction of low capital cost housing with high maintenance costs.

Sir George Young: Those who commission and design housing are responsible for striking a reasonable balance between capital and maintenance costs. To inform them about unnecessary costs which arise from defective design and construction, my Department has set up a housing defects prevention unit at the building research establishment. With the advice of the local authority associations, the unit has issued more than 60 defect action sheets over the last three years.

Control of Pollution Regulations

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce Her Majesty's Government's response to the report of the joint review committee on the effectiveness of the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980.

Mr. Waldegrave: Not yet. As indicated when publication of the report was announced on 2 May at column *185*, my right hon. Friend wants to give others concerned an opportunity to express views on the report before reaching final decisions.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek a meeting with representatives of waste disposal authorities before announcing Her Majesty's Government's decision on the report of the joint review committee on the Control of Pollution Regulations 1980.

Mr. Waldegrave: If the local authority associations would like a meeting to discuss the outcome of the review, I will be glad to arrange it.

Small Firms (Planning Controls)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consult the local authority associations before issuing any circular on planning controls on small firms which he announced on 22 April.

Mr. Macfarlane: I see no need for consultation.

Asbestos (Faslane)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what contingency plans there are to deal with the possibility of a spillage of the asbestos-contaminated materials being taken from Faslane to Greenock during their transportation by barge across the Clyde estuary.

Sir George Young: The Health and Safety Executive and the Property Services Agency are satisfied that the contractor's proposed method of transporting the material across the Clyde estuary is such that no contingency plans are necessary to guard against the possibility of spillage during the voyage.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what training has been given to the workers who will be handling asbestos-contaminated materials from Faslane.

Sir George Young: The contractor's workers handling contaminated material at Faslane were given a special training course to ensure that they were fully conversant with relevant legislation and the approved working arrangements. Once the waste has been properly sealed on site it may be regarded as a clean cargo and the Clyde port authority has confirmed that it does not consider any special training is required for its workers who will handle it at Greenock.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the contractor engaged to carry out the removal of the asbestos-contaminated materials from Faslane is a member of the Asbestos Removal Contractors Association.

Sir George Young: No. Membership is voluntary and not all firms belong. The important point is that the selected contractor has been granted a licence by the Health and Safety Executive to remove asbestos and is additionally required by the PSA to employ a subcontractor specialising in asbestos removal to advise on and supervise his methods of operation.

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 13 May, *Official Report*, column *26*, what public bodies were consulted about the transportation of asbestos contaminated material from Faslane; what form the consultation took; and how they responded.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 May 1985, c. *506*]: There have been regular consultations with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) who gave formal approval on 26 April to a document setting out the method by which the removal of the lightly contaminated material would be effected (the "method statement"). In addition, the following public bodies were consulted either by the Property Services Agency (PSA) of my Department or by its contractor, and their responses were as shown:

DUMBARTON DISTRICT COUNCIL

The contractor sent his proposed method statement to the council on 2 April. There was a meeting on 26 April with the contractor, MOD and PSA under the chairmanship of the environmental health officer. Factual questions on the method statement were answered. PSA offered the environmental health officer site access with the HSE and also offered to make available to the council the results of dust level monitoring on the site.

STRATHCLYDE REGIONAL COUNCIL

PSA officials met officers of the council's Department of Roads on 5 March. The department of roads confirmed that it had no objection in a letter dated 6 March. Further information, including the method statement, was sent by letter on 24 April. Subsequent correspondence took up detailed points from the Department of Roads.

INVERCLYDE DISTRICT COUNCIL

The contractor met the environmental health officer of this council on 18 April and a copy of the method statement was sent on 19 April. A site visit was offered to the environmental health officer. There was a written request to PSA for clarification of the extent of site contamination and this was replied to on 15 May. A member of the council wrote to PSA on 8 May suggesting that there had been a lack of consultation: a reply sent on 17 May informed him of the consultations that had taken place.

CLYDE PORT AUTHORITY

The contrator met with the authority on 9 April to discuss arrangements for the transit of the material, and subsequent telephone calls clarified handling and monitoring arrangements. The method statement was sent on 18 April and the authority has been satisfied with the arrangements.

MONKLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

The contractor mentioned his interest in tendering for the Faslane work to this council's environmental health officials at a regular meeting on 7 November 1984. No objection was raised. His method statement was sent on 22 April and was discussed at a meeting on 29 April. A further meeting took place with the council and also with Glenboig community council on 22 May both of whom have expressed concern about the use of the Glenboig licensed tip for the deposit of this material.

STRATHCLYDE POLICE

A police representative was present at the meeting with the Strathclyde regional council's department of roads on 5 March. The police were sent copies of the transport and emergency arrangements sections of the method statement and they have since arranged a contact point with the contractor.

CLYDEBANK DISTRICT COUNCIL
GLASGOW DISTRICT COUNCIL
RENFREW DISTRICT COUNCIL
STRATHKELVIN DISTRICT COUNCIL

These local authorities were each sent copies of the transport and emergency arrangements sections of the method statement, copies of the HSE letter of formal approval and copies of route maps on 8 May.

Greater London Enterprise Board

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the financing of the Greater London Enterprise Board in 1985-86 and subsequent years.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Greater London Enterprise Board is a private company, limited by guarantee, whose financing is primarily a matter for the board itself.

On 27 February 1985 my right hon. Friend gave consent to the GLC under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 for a grant to the board of £4·896 million under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972. My right hon. Friend has made it clear to the GLC that in considering whether he should consent to further proposals for further section 137 funding for this private company he will wish to take account of the extent to which liabilities will survive the proposed abolition of the GLC, and be satisfied that adequate arrangements exist for ensuring that GLEB will be properly accountable to London ratepayers for the very large sums of public money it receives.

Perry Oaks Sludge Works

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to call in for his decision any proposal for planning permission for the relocation of Perry Oaks sludge works.

Mr. Macfarlane: I will consider the case for calling in any application relating to such a proposal when the occasion arises.

STOLport (Royal Docks)

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment to which planning authority detailed applications will be made for planning permission required for further plans for the STOLport in the royal docks; and what period will be allowed for consultation with elected statutory authorities, individuals and community groups.

Sir George Young: Any applications for detailed planning permission will be made to the London Docklands Development Corporation as the development control authority for the area. It will be for the corporation to decide what consultations to invite, and the length of any consultation period (which, under the terms of the corporation's code of practice, will be not less than 14 days).

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures of sound insulation will be undertaken for properties adjacent to the proposed STOLport in the royal docks; to what standards they will conform; and who will be responsible for their installation and payment of their cost.

Sir George Young: The conditions imposed on the outline planning permission include a requirement that the developer shall, prior to operations commencing, provide a perimeter fence and noise barriers of such types and in such positions as may be approved by the local planning authority (the London Docklands Development Corporation). Details are a matter for it as development control authority and it would be inappropriate for my right hon. Friend to comment further at this time.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what types of existing or projected airplanes he expects to come within the criteria of noise and performance limits which he has established for the STOLport in the royal docks; and which types of aircraft he envisages will use it when first opened.

Sir George Young: The De Haviland DASH-7 and the De Haviland DHC-6 come within the noise criteria set for the STOLport. Evidence given at the inquiry suggested that, at that time, there were no other obvious aeroplanes that would comply with these criteria. My right hon. Friend cannot speculate on any future types of aeroplane that could come within the terms of the noise condition or the types of aeroplane that will use the STOLport when first opened.

Council Tenants (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he is making towards establishing a Londonwide computing network capable of running the London area mobility scheme for council tenants.

Mr. Gow: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 16 May 1985 at column *196*. The terms of reference for the working party include consideration of the future arrangements for cumputing needs of the mobility schemes.

London Docklands

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will ensure that once the figure of owner-occupation within the London Docklands Development Corporation area reaches the average for Inner London, as noted in the London Docklands Development Corporation 1984 corporate plan, the remaining new housing in docklands will be predominantly constructed for rent;

(2) what is the current percentage of owner-occupied housing in the London Docklands Development Corporation area on the basis of *(a)* housing completions, *(b)* housing completions and new starts and *(c)* housing completions, starts and schemes with planning permission, respectively.

Sir George Young: I will answer these questions shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the London Docklands Development Corporation is taking to monitor or collect information on land values within its area, both on London Docklands Development Corporation-owned land and on non-London Docklands Development Corporation-owned land; and whether this information will be made available to the public on request.

Sir George Young: The LDDC monitors and collects information on land values realised on disposal of its own sites, but details of these transactions between LDDC and third parties must remain commercially confidential. The LDDC also receives opinions and advice from the local district valuers on the state of the land market in the urban development area, the details of which are also confidential.

Departmental Computer Facilities

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all computer installations, hardware and peripherals in his Department, indicating for each its location, make, type, configuration, operating system, systems software, age and planned life.

Sir George Young: I will answer this question shortly.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list all those applications under sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act which were outstanding on 25 April and the date on which the applications had been received;

(2) if he will list each consent applied for under section 7 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act by the Greater London council and each of the metropolitan county councils and give the date the application was made, together, where appropriate, with the date on which consent was granted.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 29 April 1985, c. *32*]: These details have been placed in the Library.

Management Consultancy Contracts

Mr. Mates asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the contracts, with the subject of assignment, awarded to management consultancy firms by his Department in 1984, with the name of the consultants concerned.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to the reply*, 7 May 1985, c. *299*]: In the financial year 1984-85 the following firms were awarded management consultancy contracts by the Department (including PSA):

Consultancy Firm and Subject of Contract

DOE (Central)

Laurence Gould Consultants Ltd. — Review of the financial guidelines of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Arther Anderson and Co. — Study of recovered planning appeals.

Coopers Lybrand and Associates. — Review of National Heritage memorial fund.

Coopers Lybrand and Associates. — Ad hoc advice on an internal review of the work and staffing levels of the Department (MINIS-Management Information System for Ministers).

Touche Ross and Co. — Review of the management and expenditure information system (MAXIS).

Communications Audit. — Review of information dissemination.

Scicon Ltd.—Computerisation of wildlife licensing.

Inbucon & Land Use Consultants.—Royal parks study.

PSA,

Ove Arup.—Advice on provision of civil engineering services.

Deloitte, Haskins and Sells. — Advice on improvements to financial management and control procedures within PSA.

Deloitte, Haskins and Sells. — London region — line management performance project.

BIS Applied Systems Ltd, — Advice on establishing an organisation for information technology management within the PSA.

BIS Applied Systems Ltd. — Survey and advice on the procurement, installation and bringing into service of telephone exchanges within PSA's Telecoms strategy.

Performance Systems Inc.—Capacity planning assignment

The Crown Suppliers

Coopers Lybrand and Associates.—Advice on development of computer strategy.

Sugden Consultancy Services. — Advice and training on procurement and distribution.

Atkins Planning. — Advice and assistance with project management and control.

Woodlands

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate for England, Scotland and Wales respectively, the percentages of total woodland and the areas represented by *(a)* ancient semi-natural woodlands, *(b)* ancient woodland sites, *(c)* recent semi-natural and *(d)* other broadleaved woodlands.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 May 1985, c. 507]: There is no comprehensive estimate of various classifications of woodland, pending completion of inventories by the Nature Conservancy Council. But a

census in 1980 by the Forestry Commission of areas of broadleaved woodlands over 0·25 hectares in extent indicates that there are in total about 547,000 hectares in England, 69,000 hectares in Wales and 136,000 hectares in Scotland.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has to the percentages of broadleaved woodland in England, Scotland and Wales, respectively, which are contained within sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 May 1985, c. *123*]: The Nature Conservancy Council has provided the following rough estimates of the percentages of the total area of broadleaved woodlands that are within sites of special scientific interest: England 8 per cent., Wales 7 per cent., Scotland 22 per cent.

EMPLOYMENT

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The available information from Departmental records is as follows:

	**1983-84 (from 14 May 1984)*	*1984-85 (to-date)*
Total number of priority written questions	364	702
Number of holding replies given to priority written questions	45	75
Holding replies as percentage of total	12	11

* Information for the whole of the 1983-84 Session is not available except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The available information from Departmental statistics is as follows:

	**1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85 (to date)*
Oral	372	357	716	452
Priority Written	2,007	711	1,328	702
Ordinary Written		502	1,281	667
Total	2,379	1,570	3,325	1,821

* Information for the 1981-82 Session comes from statistics held by the House of Commons Library, which are on a slightly different basis. They do not distinguish between priority and ordinary written questions, and for oral questions include only those actually reached orally plus supplementaries, rather than all those tabled for oral reply.

Wood Preservatives

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to the answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column 250, he will list in the *Official Report* the products used as wood preservatives currently known to the Health and Safety Executive to contain lindane, tributyl tin oxide, or both.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Pesticide Poisoning

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer of 12 February, *Official Report*, column 136, whether he will publish in the *Official Report* such information as he has about the number of incidents of pesticide poisoning resulting from use in wood treatment investigated by the Health and Safety Executive in the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The numbers of incidents of pesticide poisoning resulting from use in wood treatment investigated by Her Majesty's agricultural inspectorate for the last five years are as follows:

Year	*Number of incidents*
1980	1
1981	1
1982	1
1983	0
1984	0

Pesticides Incidents Information

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether the Health and Safety Executive are taking steps to reorganise the national collection of pesticides incidents information; and whether he will circulate to regional offices of the Health and Safety Executive agricultural inspectorate the "First Incident" report by Friends of the Earth, copies of which have been sent to him.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no plans to reorganise the national collection of information on pesticide incidents. Copies of the "First Incident" report by the Friends of the Earth have been circulated to the regional offices of Her Majesty's agricultural inspectorate.

"Your Health"

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are being taken to include consideration of the health of the general public, as well as that of those involved in agriculture, in Her Majesty's agricultural inspectorate's next national safety campaign, "Your Health".

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Her Majesty's agricultural inspectorate's "Your Health" safety campaign deals with the interests of the general public in respect of pesticides application and disposal.

Youth Training

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Employment, at the most recent count, how many youth

training mode A schemes had trainees amounting to less than 75 per cent. capacity; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I regret the information is not available in the form requested. However, it is estimated that at the end of the 1984-85 year, in March 1985, around 70 per cent. of approved mode A places were occupied nationally. The level of occupancy of mode A schemes in 1984-85 was good, peaking at 80 per cent. nationally in October 1984. One hundred per cent. occupancy is difficult to attain given that young people may enter or leave at any time and that it is necessary to provide a range of provision to satisfy young people's training needs.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has about the drop-out rate from the youth training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information about how long young people stay on the youth training scheme and what they do on leaving is available from records held by the Manpower Services Commission and from the commission's regular survey of young people who leave the scheme.

The most recent information relates to those who left the scheme between July and September 1984, and is set out as follows:

Time spent on Scheme

Percentage

	Weeks					
	0-13	*14-26*	*27-39*	*40-47*	*48-52*	*All leavers*
In full-time work with same employer	5	11	20	25	40	31
In full-time work with different employer	30	31	30	38	26	28
On full-time course at college/training centre	8	6	5	4	3	4
Back at school	3	1	—	—	—	1
On another Youth Training Scheme	23	10	2	1	1	5
Doing something else	3	3	3	3	3	3
Unemployed	28	39	39	29	26	28
Percentage of all respondents	15	5	6	8	67	100

This shows that those young people who stay longer on the scheme are more likely to get a job.

Sexual Discrimination

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government with regard to discrimination in employment upon the basis of sexual orientation.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government deplore all unfair discrimination and we have recently brought into operation the Equal Opportunities Commission's code of practice giving extensive guidance to supplement the Sex Discrimination Act.

Trade Union Act 1984 (Section 17(F))

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will seek to amend section 17(F) of the Trad Union Act 1984 to include candidates for general secretaries of trade unions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Part I of the Trade Union Act 1984 requires that every voting member of a union's governing body must be elected by secret ballot at least every five years. General secretaries who have this voting right will be covered by the provisions of the Act when they come into force on 1 October. It would be premature to seek to amend the legislation before it has taken effect.

Careers Service

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Employment: (1) what proportion of school leavers failed to register with the careers service within a reasonable period from the end of the last three school terms for which records are available;

(2) what proportion of school leavers registered with the careers service failed to attend within three months of the end of the last three school terms for which records are available.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information requested is not available.

Miners (Retraining)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list the skillcentres that have been invited to assist in retraining miners, indicating whether the centre is one being considered for closure;

(2) which skillcentres in mining areas have not been offered opportunities to help retrain miners, listing annexes separately from main centres; and which of these are being considered for closure.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The contract between the National Coal Board and the skillcentre training agency does not specify which centres will be used to retrain those mineworkers who choose to take voluntary redundancy and who opt to be retrained. The contract was made in the knowledge that the agency was proposing to streamline its network and the National Coal Board was satisfied that the remaining skillcentres would be properly located and equipped to do the job.

Accidents (Reporting)

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he intends to take any new action to ensure that arrangements for reporting accidents are implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As stated in my reply of 22 May 1985 at column *420*, the Health and Safety Commission is considering proposals for new regulations to replace the

Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR) 1980. These would serve as a basis for a comprehensive long term information system. The intention is to have such a system in operation as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the levels of male and female unemployment in inner city partnership areas; and how these figures compare with unemployment in Britain as a whole.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 May 1985, c. *354-5*]: following is the available information which is in the Library. That table shows unemployment in the inner city partnership areas as at 11 April 1985, together with the corresponding figures for Great Britain.

Unemployed claimants—Inner City Partnership Areas—11 April 1985

	Male	*Female*
Hackney	14,622	5,616
Islington	11,649	4,719
Lambeth special area	17,531	6,912
Lambeth area of need (included in special area)	13,641	5,258
London Docklands Development Corporation area	3,552	1,171
Manchester and Salford special area		
Manchester section	19,804	6,158
Salford section	6,022	1,630
Liverpool special area	26,250	9,264
Newcastle and Gateshead partnership area		
Gateshead section	11,718	3,929
Newcastle section	10,018	3,340
Birmingham special area	39,644	18,832
Birmingham Core area (included in special area)	31,531	10,185
Great Britain	2,181,668	968,489

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women are classified as part-time workers at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 May 1985, c. *605*]: In September 1981, the latest date for which the employees in employment series provides a comprehensive split between full and part-time employees, there were 718,000 male and 3,781,000 female employees in employment in Great Britain who worked part-time. For more recent dates the series provides analyses of part-time employees for females only. In December 1984, the latest date for which such information is available, the number of female employees in employment working part-time was estimated as 4,282,000.

The labour force survey provides information on a different basis. The 1984 survey estimates that, in the spring of 1984, there were 583,000 males and 4,272,000 females in employment who regarded themselves as working part-time.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Biffen: The information requested is as follows:

Session 1983-84: 4 (approximately 4 per cent.)
Current Session (to date): 3 (approximately 3 per cent.)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Beith: The information requested is as follows:

1983-84: None
1984-85 (to date): 1

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal how many parliamentary questions have been answered by him in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: The information requested is as follows:

	Oral	*Priority Written*	*Written*
1981-82*	36	40	54
1982-83*	27	22	42
1983-84	50	70	86
1984-85 (to date)	31	96	42

* For the Sessions marked thus, the incumbent of my job was the Lord President of the Council, as opposed to the Lord Privy Seal.

Source: Departmental Statistics. It should be noted that the count produced by the POLIS system in the House Library will differ from the above figures, in that on POLIS:

(a) the oral count includes only those oral questions actually reached, plus supplementaries counted as separate questions, and

(b) the written count includes, orals not reached, writtens, priority writtens and holding replies all counted as separate questions.

The overall POLIS count will therefore exceed the departmental count.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how many parliamentary questions have been answered by him in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break down these figures into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Beith: The information requested is as follows:

	Oral	*Priority Written*	*Written*
1981-82	6	7	18
1982-83	4	1	8
1983-84	7	10	22
1984-85 (to date)	1	13	9

DEFENCE

Dog Training

Mr. Lester asked the Secretary of State for Defence when, and at what cost, the dog training school at RAF Newton was constructed.

Mr. Lee: The dog training section of the RAF police school moved to RAF Newton in 1975. The school was able to make use of a number of existing buildings. Apart from some minor works services, a little under £0·5 million. At 1975 prices was spent on the construction of accommodation for the dog section.

Mr. Lester asked the Secretary of State for Defence if a decision has yet been made to amalgamate the Army and RAF dog training schools at Melton Mowbray or at RAF Newton.

Mr. Lee: No.

Mr. Lester asked the Secretary of State for Defence what area of land is calculated to be needed to provide effectively for an amalgamated dog training unit without causing environmental problems for residents.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated that 985 acres of land are required for an amalgamated dog training school. This figure includes 400 acres needed to train dogs in long-range windscenting. No environmental problems are anticipated.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the United States of America about the storage of chemical weapons in the United Kingdom; what decisions transpired as a result; and what are the reasons for those decisions.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on 26 March at columns *180-181*.

Military Training

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations with local people take place before he acquires land for military training purposes.

Mr. Lee: The Ministry of Defence follows the procedure laid down in the Department of the Environment's circular 18/84, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list by name, location, type of use and acreage, all Army dry training areas in Great Britain;

(2) what is the acreage and locality of all land acquired and disposed of for Army dry training areas for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Lee: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy for the present and future uses of land for dry training purposes.

Mr. Lee: There is a continuing and increasing need to use land for dry training purposes in order to undertake military training for which there is no requirement to fire live ammunition.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the name, locality and acreage of land currently used by his Department for dry training which forms part of an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. Lee: This information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of occasions in the last 20 years when land formerly used for dry training underwent a change of use and was used for live firing.

Mr. Lee: Records are not held in a form which would allow this question to be answered.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy for the minimum size of ground suitable for any dry training areas.

Mr. Lee: There is no minimum size: it depends on the location and the particular training use made of it.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Heseltine: Over 1,000 questions have been set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by me in each of the Sessions referred to by my hon. Friend. Because of the number of questions involved and the way in which departmental records are maintained, I regret that this information could only be provided at disproportionate effort and cost.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: The information requested, which has been compiled from Departmental statistics, is as follows:

Session	*Total No. Questions*	**Oral*	*†Priority Written*	*†Ordinary Written*
1984-85 (to 24 May 1985)	1,852	326	1,024	502
1983-84	2,278	365	1,267	646
1982-83	1,430	306	749	375
1981-82	1,630	360	715	555

* Includes questions which, although tabled for oral answer, received a written reply.

† Includes questions originally tabled to other Departments which were subsequently transferred to the Ministry of Defence.

HMS Otter (Refit)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the refit of HMS Otter will be completed.

Mr. Lee: The refit of HMS Otter started in December 1984 and is planned to take about two years.

Tucano and PC-9 Aircraft

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to his answer of 22 May, *Offical Report*, column 426, what was the total acquisition cost of the Shorts Tucano;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column 426, what was the total acquisition cost of the British Aerospace PC-9 as specified in British Aerospace's final bid.

Mr. Butler: Following normal practice, the total acquisition costs of these aircraft cannot be disclosed without breaking commercial confidentiality.

SP-70 Howitzer

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the SP-70 howitzer will enter service with the British Army.

Mr. Butler: In the early 1990s.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many SP-70 howitzers will be ordered by the British Army.

Mr. Butler: Development of SP-70 by the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy is not yet complete and no firm production orders have been placed. It is not our practice to provide details of potential orders of defence equipment.

Mark 19 Grenade Launcher

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the United States Air Force intends to install the Mark 19 automatic grenade launcher at Molesworth common.

Mr. Lee: It is too early to say.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the installation of the Mark 19 automatic grenade launcher at Greenham common;

(2) if he will outline the kind of threat which necessitates the use by United Kingdom forces of 15 Mark 19 automatic grenade launchers;

(3) whether other American bases in the United Kingdom will be equipped with the Mark 19 automatic grenade launcher.

Mr. Lee: I will answer shortly.

Central America (British Service Men)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any British service men serving in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala or Honduras at the present time.

Mr. Lee: No members of the armed forces are serving in these countries in an official capacity. However, 13 service personnel are currently participating in the Operation Raleigh expedition to Honduras under the terms given in my reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 30 April 1984 at column *18*.

RAF Caerwent, Gwent

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the function of the United States Army's facilities at RAF Caerwent, Gwent, and the total expenditure by Britain on RAF Caerwent since 1979, either independently or through common funded North Atlantic Treaty Organisation programmes;

(2) whether United States Army artillery ammunition is stored at RAF Caerwent.

Mr. Lee: RAF Caerwent is a United States Army munitions storage facility. For security reasons, we do not provide details of equipment and weapons stored at defence establishments. On expenditure by Britain, I have nothing to add to the answer I gave on 20 May at column *366* to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie).

Secretary of State (Official Car)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Defence what make of vehicle is his official car; and what is the reason for that choice.

Mr. Heseltine: My official car is a Jaguar saloon from the Government car service. It was chosen to meet the requirements of my official duties.

RAF (Trainer Aircraft)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) on 23 May, *Official Report*, column *501*, about the new trainer aircraft for the Royal Air Force, if he will investigate the circumstances in which a misunderstanding arose between his Department and British Aerospace; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: As I explained in my reply of 23 May 1985 to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) at column *501*, the matter has been fully discussed between my Department and British Aerospace and is now regarded as closed by both sides. There is therefore no need for any further investigation.

Greenham Common

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence for what reasons units of the United States army are engaged in protecting the perimeter of Greenham common.

Mr. Lee: United States Army personnel have not been deployed to protect the perimeter at RAF Greenham common.

Trinitrotoluene

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the proportion of trinitrotoluene used by or in use with the British services, either directly or in ammunition filling, that is of Warsaw pact manufacture or origin.

Mr. Butler: We have not procured any trinitrotoluene (TNT) directly from Warsaw pact sources.

Most of the TNT used by, or in use with, the British services is procured through subcontracts from our prime contractors. The only known instance of a prime contractor incorporating TNT from a Warsaw pact source is the recent order for 11,000 25 pdr shells for training purposes placed with the Belgian firm of PRB. The TNT in that order constitutes very much less than 1 per cent. of that used by or in use with the British services.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC Budget

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the EEC 1985 draft budget shows a 17 per cent. reduction in non-common agricultural policy expenditure; what are the main programmes so affected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The 1985 draft budget as established by the Budget Council on 23 April shows a 12 per cent. reduction in non-common agricultural policy expenditure compared with the 1984 Budget. Comparisons are distorted by the fact that the 1984 budget contained provision for United Kingdom rebates to be paid through expenditure programmes as opposed to the system of revenue abatements that applies for 1985 and future years.

The figures are as follows:

	mecu
1984 budget (including supplementary budget)	
Total expenditure	27,249
of which CAP expenditure	19,120
Non-CAP expenditure	8,129
1985 draft budget	
Total expenditure	27,930
of which CAP expenditure	20,751
Non-CAP expenditure	7,179

Afforestation Schemes

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received advocating the introduction of measures to ensure that afforestation schemes which benefit from tax reliefs under schedule D are in the environmental and economic interests of the public.

Mr. Moore: I have seen the reply which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) on 21 May at column *858*. As I explained in my reply to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 9 May at columns *477-8*, the tax treatment of forestry owners is determined under the appropriate tax law. This does not distinguish between planting schemes on environmental, social or other grounds. I have not received any other representations but would refer the hon. Member to what my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland said to him on 15 May at columns *312-13*.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the amount of tax revenue forgone by granting reliefs for afforestation schemes under tax schedule D in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Moore: The tax revenue forgone is of the order of £10 million a year.

Budget Council

Mr. Jackson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement about the Budget Council on 22 May.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I represented the United Kingdom at this Council in Brussels.

The Council reaffirmed that the maximum rate provisions for non-obligatory expenditure commitments and payments should be respected, and that the inter-Governmental agreement for additional payment of 1982 mecu should not be reopened.

The Council met a delegation from the European Parliament led by its President, M. Pflimlin, to exchange views on its proposed amendments and modifications to the 1985 draft budget.

The Council accepted all of the Parliament's amendments which it had earlier agreed at the Second Reading of the rejected draft 1985 budget in November 1984. It increased provision for Community food aid payments by 89 mecu. A further 50 mecu was added to the commitment appropriations for integrated Mediterranean programmes proposed at the Council on 23 April; the 50 mecu were offset by reductions in other commitment appropriations. Finally, supplementary revenue of 232 mecu was incorporated into the budget; 36 mecu of this was matched by food aid expenditure, and the balance by including in the budget part of the outstanding deficit arising from 1984.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply;

(2) how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is contained in the following table:

	Oral	*Priority Written*	*Written*
1981-82	418	583	840
1982-83	320	455	736
1983-84	557	1,171	1,242
1984-85*	488	644	751

* Up to Whit Recess.

In 1983-84, 610 priority written questions or 52 per cent. initially received holding replies. Of these, 557 received substantive replies within one week of the holding reply, 46 within two weeks and seven within three weeks.

In 1984-85, up to the Whit Recess, the corresponding figures are 287 or 45 per cent., 214, 66 and 7 respectively.

Source:

Departmental statistics. It should be noted that the count produced by the POLIS system in the House Library will differ from the above figures, in that on POLIS:

(a) the oral count includes only those oral questions actually reached, plus supplementaries counted as separate questions, and

(b) the written count includes orals not reached, writtens, priority writtens and holding replies all counted as separate questions.

The overall POLIS count will therefore exceed the departmental count.

Travel Expenditure

Mr. Spearing asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state separately the costs incurred by Civil Service Departments in 1984 in respect of rail, air and travel by motor car, respectively.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is not held centrally. In 1983-84 expenditure on travel and subsistence for the Civil Service amounted to £206 million. Approximately half of this was travel.

Income Statistics (West Midlands)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of citizens residing in the west Midlands county who presently earn *(a)* £5,000 to £9,999, *(b)* £10,000 to £14,999, *(c)* £15,000 to £19,999, *(d)* £20,000 to £24,999, *(e)* £25,000 to £29,999 and *(f)* more than £30,000.

Mr. Moore: The most recent county information on earned income is for 1982-83. Estimates based on a sample survey are as follows. The income of wives has been aggregated with that of their husbands.

Range of earned income before tax £	*Number of single people and married couples thousands*
5,000 to 9,999	785
10,000 to 14,999	229
15,000 to 19,999	50
20,000 to 24,999	17
25,000 to 29,999	9
30,000 and over	8

Business Expansion Scheme

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish the study of the business expansion scheme, commissioned by the Treasury and undertaken by Peat, Marwick and Mitchell;

(2) if he will list the categories of companies benefiting from the business expansion scheme in 1983-84 and 1984-85 ; and if he will give the number of companies in each category;

(3) if he will publish an analysis in the *Official Report* of the average rate of tax relieved by the deductions under the business expansion scheme.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Turnover Taxes (Harmonisation)

Dr. McDonald ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* annexes (1), (2), (3), (5), (6) and (7) to the letter sent by the Commissioners of Customs and Excise to the European Commission on 28 December 1977 concerning derogations under article 27(5) of the sixth Council directive on the harmonisation of turnover taxes.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Fisher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was private sector investment in manufacturing industry in each of the last 20 years, expressed in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* as a percentage of 1964-65 figures, *(c)* real terms, adjusted for inflation and *(d)* as a percentage of the 1964-65 figure adjusted for inflation.

Mr. Moore: Figures for private sector investment in manufacturing industry are not yet available for 1984-85. Figures are given in the table for calendar years up to and including 1984.

*Private Sector Manufacturing Investment**

	(a) Current prices £ million	*(b) Percentage of 1965 figure (from (a))†*	*(c) Constant 1980 prices* £ million	*(d) Percentage of 1965 figure (from (c))†*
1965	1,397	100	6,355	100
1966	1,467	105	6,450	101
1967	1,362	97	5,978	94
1968	1,487	106	6,311	99
1969	1,696	121	6,896	109
1970	1,964	141	7,385	116
1971	1,893	136	6,482	102
1972	1,737	124	5,511	87
1973	2,165	155	6,183	97
1974	2,782	199	6,720	106
1975	3,041	218	5,879	93
1976	3,316	237	5,497	86
1977	4,190	300	5,996	94
1978	5,221	374	6,709	106
1979	6,162	441	7,088	112
1980	6,175	442	6,175	97
1981	5,097	365	4,665	73
1982	5,238	375	4,493	71
1983	5,463	391	4,454	70
1984	6,422	460	5,014	79

* Excluding leased assets. This exclusion has the effect of reducing the percentages given in columns *(b)* and *(d)* given the growth of leasing in the 1970s.

† All percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to the answer dated 14 May, *Official Report*, column *85*, concerning real exchange rates, whether he will provide figures for the increases in the normal rate since the fourth quarter of 1984 together with an explanation of what is covered by wholesale export prices.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The wholesale export price data used in my answer of 14 May derived from line 63 of the relevant country tables of the IMF's "International Financial Statistics", which is available in the House of Commons Library. The definitions vary from country to country, and can be found in the footnotes to those tables.

Percentage changes in sterling's nominal exchange rates against the currencies requested between the fourth quarter of 1984 (average) and the latest available date (29 May 1985) are as follows:

	Percentage change
Dollar/sterling	+3·8
Yen/sterling	+6·3
Deutschmark/sterling	+4·9
French franc/sterling	+4·3
Belgian franc*/sterling	+4·8
Italian lira/sterling	+8·3
Dutch guilder/sterling	+5·0

* The Luxembourg franc has the same external value as the Belgian franc.

Afforestation (Tax Relief)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy that tax reliefs for afforestation awarded under schedule D should be made available only with the approval of the Forestry Commission over the siting and design of each forest.

Mr. Moore: I have noted the hon. Member's suggestion but I would refer him to the answer I have given to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) today.

Helsinki Final Act

Mr. James Lamond asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many copies of the Helsinki final act were printed by Her Majesty's Government; and how many have been sold to the public since the signing of the Act on 1 August 1975.

Mr. Hayhoe: 5,800 copies have been printed. HMSO did not separately categorise sales to the public until 1977, but only about 300 in all are left in stock.

Export Subsidies (Follow-on Benefits)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a copy of the National Economic Development Office report on evidence about the follow-on benefits arising from projects gained with export subsidies as referred to in paragraph 4.3 of the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on fixed rate export finance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: A copy of the National Economic Development Office report on "Follow-on business arising from Government export support" has been placed in the Library. I understand that a copy has already been sent to the Public Accounts Committee in connection with its inquiry into fixed rate export finance. The Government will respond to any report it makes in the normal way.

Capital Distribution and Taxation

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table setting out the distribution of *(a)* capital holdings, *(b)* capital transfer tax liability and *(c)* capital gains tax liability, in each case according to the distribution of earned income.

Mr. Moore: I regret that information is not available in the form requested.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Wainwright asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for the purposes of cash limits, what total amounts were deducted from gross expenditure of HM Customs and Excise in 1984-85 in respect of sales of material confiscated by HM Customs and Excise, rents from sub-letting of premises, and other commercial items.

Mr. Hayhoe: Final expenditure figures for 1984-85 for HM Customs and Excise are not yet available. The most recent estimate is that a net sum of £3,204,372 was realised from the sale of seized goods. None of this was deducted from gross expenditure since the whole amount was paid directly into the consolidated fund. There were no receipts from the sub-letting of premises. Taking 'other commercial items' to mean sales of fixed assets and of stores, the latest estimate is that £241,778 was realised and was used to offset gross expenditure.

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the provisions under which Her Majesty's Customs and Excise seeks to require a person, in connection with any assigned matter, as defined in the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979, to produce, furnish or deliver any document, or cause any document to be produced, furnished or delivered, or permit the Commissioners of Customs and Excise, or a person authorised by them to inspect any document or to make or take extracts from or copies of or remove any document; and *(a)* which of these provisions are not concerned with the assessment, collection and enforcement of value-added tax, car tax, customs duties, excise duties, betting and gaming duties or any penalties or interest related thereto and *(b)* which of these provisions Her Majesty's Customs and Excise seek to apply to third parties.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 May 1985, c. *247*]: The following are the provisions under which Her Majesty's Customs and Excise may seek to require a person, in connection with an assigned matter, as defined in the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979, to produce, furnish or deliver a document or cause a document to be produced, furnished or delivered or permit the Commissioners of Customs and Excise or a person authorised by them to inspect a document or to make or take extracts from or copies of or remove a document.

Under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979

12(2)*(a)**
14(1)
17(2)*
21(4)*(a)*(i)
31(2A)
33(1)
33(3)*(a), (b), (c)*
35(1)
36(1) & (2)
37(1)
38(2)
51(1)
53(1)
54(2)
55(6)
56(3)*(b)*
56(4)
57(1)*
57(3)*(c)*
58(2)*(b)*
58(3)*(b)*
58A(2)*(c)*
58A(3)(i)
58A(4)
58B(1)
58B(2)
58B(4)
58C(2)
58E(1)*(a)*
58E(2)
58E(4)
59(2)*(b)*
62(1)
63(i)
63(2)
64(2)
64(4)
65(1)*(b)*
66(1)*(b)*
66(1)*(c)*
66(1)*(d)*
68B(1)
71(1)

72(3)*(b)*
73(1)*(b)*
74(1)*(c)*
75(1)
77(1)
77(4)
79(1)
79(2)
80(1)
93(2)*(g)*
95(2)*(g)*
99(4)
100D(i)
100(D)*(k)*
104(4)
108(1)
109(1)
119(2)
120(3)
125(3)*
133(1)
133(4)
133(5)
139(2)*(b)*
139(4)
157(1)
166(7)

Schedule 3, pargraph 3, Customs and Excise Duty (General Reliefs) Act 1979

Section 3(5), paragraph 3, Customs and Excise Duty (General Reliefs) Act 1979

Section 5(2), paragraph 3, Customs and Excise Duty (General Reliefs) Act 1979

The Value Added Tax Act 1983

Paragraph 8(2)*(a)* and *(b)* of schedule 7.

Paragraph 8(3)*(a)* and *(b)* of schedule 7.

The Car Tax Act 1983

Paragraph 6 of schedule 1.

Subordinate Legislation Statutory Instrument	
1958/1965	Import Duty Reliefs (Administration) Order
1976/2105	Import Duty (Quota Relief) (Administration) Order
1978/194	Agricultural Levy Reliefs (Frozen Beef and Veal) Order
1979/737	Customs Duty (Quota Relief) Order
1980/245	Customs Duties (Quota Relief) Order
1980/905	Customs Duties (Quota Relief) (No. 2) Order
1980/2032	Customs Duties (ECSC) (Quota and other Reliefs) (No. 2) Order
1981/621	Agricultural Levy Reliefs (Frozen Beef and Veal) Order
1981/911	Customs Duties (Quota Relief) Order
1981/1777	Customs Duties (ECSC) (Quota and Other Reliefs) Order
1977/910	Inward Processing Relief Regulations
1979/554	Customs Duties (Standard Exchange Relief) Regulations
1979/555	Outward Processing Relief Regulations
1980/279	Anti-Dumping (Revocation) Order
1978/1147	Anti-Dumping and Countervailing Duties Order
1980/762	Customs and Excise (Community Transit) Regulations
1953/1532	Customs (Land Boundary) Regulations
1984/1176	Control of Movement of Goods Regulations
1979/564	Pleasure Craft (Arrival and Report) Regulations
1981/1259	Aircraft (Customs and Excise) Regulations
1981/1260	Ship's Report, Importation and Exportation by Sea Regulations
1976/1223	Customs Duties (Deferred Payments) Regulations
1955/814	Commercial Samples (Temporary Importation) Regulations
1955/1346	Tourist Publicity Materials (Temporary Importation) Regulations
1958/2141	Films (Temporary Importation) Regulations

Subordinate Legislation Statutory Instrument	
1963/1	Temporary Importation (Goods for Exhibition) Regulations
	Temporary Importation (Professional Effects) Regulations
1967/940	Temporary Importation (Technical Examination and Standards Testing) Regulations
1968/1280	Temporary Importation (Printed Forms) Regulations
1970/423	Temporary Importation (Equipment on Hire or Loan) Regulations
1971/1356	Temporary Importation (Magnetic Tapes) Regulations
1976/1099	Temporary Importation (Packings) Regulations
1952/2225	Carriage of Goods Coastwise Regulations
1979/207	Customs Warehousing Regulations
1977/2042	Import Duties (End-Use Goods) Regulations
1935/689	Import Duties (Valuation of Goods) Regulations
1981/1641	Export of Goods (Control) Order
	The Postal Packets (Customs and Excise) Regulations 1975
1954/1406	Duty Free Supplies for the Royal Navy Regulations 1954
1969/1784	The Export of Horses (Protection) Order 1969
1979/1701	The Importation of Equine Animals Order 1979
1977/944	The Importation of Animals Order 1977
1979/1707	The Importation of Equine Animals Order 1979
1979/1702	The Importation of Birds, Poultry and Hatching Eggs Order 1979
1979/1703	The Importation of Hay and Straw Order 1979
1980/14	The Importation of Animal Products and Poultry Products Order 1980
1981/1051	The Export of Animals (Protection) Order 1981
1957/875	The Copyright (Customs) Regulations 1957
1927/783	Iso-Propyl Alcohol Regulations
1952/2229	Spirits Regulations
1952/2231	Stills Regulations
1960/1350	Mechanical Lighters Regulations
1963/1381	Match Duty Regulations
1976/1207	Cider and Perry Regulations
1978/893	Beer Regulations
1978/1780	Excise Duty (Relief on alcoholic Ingredients) Regulations
1979/904	Tobacco Products Regulations
1979/1240	Wine and Made-Wine Regulations
1979/1240	Wine and Made-Wine Regulations (as amended by SI 1985/404
1983/611	Spirits Regulations
1982/612	Excise Warehousing (Etc.) Regulations
1983/947	Excise Duties (Deferred Payment) Regulations
1972/846	Gas (Road Fuel) Regulations
1973/1311	Hydrocarbon Oil Regulations
1973/118	General Betting Duty Regulations
1969/1100	Bingo Duty Regulations
1980/1147	Gaming Licence Duty Regulations
1984/261	General Betting Duty Regulations
1984/1551	General Betting Duty Regulations (Northern Ireland)

The provisions starred may be applied to third parties.

These provisions may be used as appropriate either for the assessment, collection and enforcement of taxes and duties or for the enforcement of prohibitions on importation.

There are also provisions of general application under the criminal law which are used by officers of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. Customs officers may collect and seize documents as evidence in the same way as police officers may do so. Those powers are modified in the police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which is applied to Customs and Excise by section 114, and which is intended to come into force in 1986. There are also specific procedural rules, once proceedings have commenced in the courts, which deal with documentary evidence. Under section 7 of the Bankers' Books Evidence Act 1879 a court may order that a bank permit inspection

and copying of its books. Under section 14 of the Crown proceedings Act 1947 the High Court may order the production of certain accounts and documents. Or a court may order that a witness attend court and produce such documents as are named in the summons to attend. In these respects Her Majesty's Customs and Excise is in the same position as any other party to proceedings.

There are, in addition to the above provisions of United Kingdom legislation, directly applicable provisions of Community law covering a wide and diversified field of activity where are commonly to be found requirements to furnish documents as a condition, for example, of the release of goods. It has not been possible, in the time available, to identify and collate these cases for inclusion in this reply.

PAYE System

Mr. Grylls asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress he is making in putting the pay-as-you-earn system on to a more cumulative system; and when he expects to put national insurance contributions and pay-as-you-earn calculations side by side in same deduction tables.

Mr. Moore: [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 May 1985, c. *561*]: I take it from the context that my hon. Friend means "a non-cumulative system". The Green Paper on reform of personal taxation, to be published later this year, will discuss a range of possible developments, including non-cumulation for PAYE and closer integration between the tax and social security systems.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Middle East

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in the middle east.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters).

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him, including Overseas Development questions, in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Renton: Details, which have been drawn from departmental statistics, are as follows:

Department/Period	*Number of Priority Written Questions*	*Number of Holding Replies*	*Percentage*
June 1983 to November 1984 Diplomatic wing	1,075	*22	2·04
(ODA)	(305)	(5)	(1·63)
November 1984 to Whit Recess 1985 Diplomatic wing	508	10	1·96
(ODA)	(162)	†(12)	(7·4)

* figure includes 9 similar questions given a single holding reply.
† figure reflects 12 similar questions which received a single holding reply.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many parliamentary questions (including Overseas Development questions) have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Details, which are drawn from departmental statistics, are as follows:

	Oral	*Priority Written*	*Written*	*Total*	*Sub Totals*
November 1981 to November 1982					
Diplomatic wing	545	655	458	1,658	1,927
(ODA)	(89)	(90)	(90)	(269)	
November 1982 to 13 May 1983					
Diplomatic wing	424	467	326	1,217	1,505
(ODA)	(71)	(110)	(107)	(288)	
(Election 9 June. State opening 22 June 1983)					
June 1983 to October 1984					
Diplomatic wing	728	1,075	487	2,290	2,920
(ODA)	(93)	(305)	(232)	(630)	
November 1984 to 24 May 1985					
Diplomatic wing	559	508	398	1,465	1,839
(ODA)	(93)	(162)	(119)	(374)	
Diplomatic wing	2,256	2,705	1,669	6,630	
(ODA)	(346)	(667)	(548)	(1,561)	
Grand Totals	2,602	3,372	2,217	8,191	8,191

Mr. William Beausire

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on developments in the case of the Anglo-Chilean citizen, William Beausire, who disappeared in 1974; and what representations have recently been made to the Chilean authorities on this case.

Mr. Renton: The Chilean authorities say that their investigations about Mr. Beausire's disappearance have produced no result. In February 1985 they suspended further judicial review of all such cases pending presentation of new evidence. We are continuing to press them for a satisfactory explanation. The matter is also being pursued with the Argentine Government through the Swiss protecting power. In January 1985, we were informed that there was no evidence in the report of the Argentine National Commission of the Disappearance of Persons about Mr. Beausire.

Chile

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will review, or have already reviewed, relations with the Chilean Government in the light of the imposition of the state of siege in November 1984 and its subsequent renewal in May 1985.

Mr. Renton: As I made clear to the hon. Member on 9 May 1985 at column *494*, we naturally take account of changing circumstances in Chile.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in which particular circumstances, and in which specific individual cases of human rights violations, the British embassy has intervened in the period since full diplomatic relations were restored with the Government of Chile in 1980.

Mr. Renton: As I told the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 28 March, the Chilean Government are well aware of our concern about human rights violations in Chile, both general and particular. We have made this clear to them on numerous occasions both formally and informally, on a bilateral basis and with our European partners.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the deputy under-secretary Sir William Harding, met the opposition Democratic Popular Movement, Socialist Bloc and the Democratic Alliance coalitions during his recent visit to Chile; and if he will specify the groups and their representatives which he met.

Mr. Renton: As I told the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock, and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 28 March, at column 317, Sir William Harding met a wide range of Chilean opinion during his visit in February, including members of the Government, democratic opposition parties, trade union leaders and human rights groups.

Mr. Pedro Fernandez Lembach

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what communications Her Majesty's Government have had with the Chilean authorities about the case of Pedro Fernandez Lembach; what information he has as to the conditions in which he is living at present; whether he has been visited by embassy staff; and whether there have been any developments in the prisoner's application for his sentence to be commuted to one of exile.

Mr. Renton: As Sr Fernandez Lembach is a Chilean national we have no formal standing to intervene with the Chilean authorities on his behalf nor any right of access to him. But we have made clear to them that if Sr Lembach's sentence were commuted to one of exile, we would issue him with a United Kingdom visa. The Chilean Ministry of Justice has informed Her Majesty's ambassador in April that it is not yet prepared to consider commuting Sr Lembach's sentence.

Angola

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the British Government representatives at the United Nations Organisation will meet the South-West Africa People's Organisation's representatives in the United Nations Organisation to discuss human rights in Angola.

Mr. Rifkind: No. We have constantly made clear our concern about human rights abuses in southern Africa. SWAPO is well aware of our views.

Rudolf Hess

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received a reply to the request made to the Soviet Union in November 1984 for the release of Rudolf Hess.

Mr. Renton: Yes. On 9 May the Soviet embassy confirmed the refusal of the Soviet authorities to release Rudolf Hess. Despite this disappointing response, we will continue to urge that he should be released on humanitarian grounds.

Berlin

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there has been any change in the agreement recorded in the letter from the three high commissioners to the Federal German Chancellor concerning the exercise of reserve rights relating to Berlin, as amended by letter No. 10 of 23 October 1954.

Mr. Renton: There has been no change to the letter of 26 May 1952 from the three allied high commissioners to the Federal Chancellor on the exercise of the reserved rights relating to Berlin, in the version of letter X of 23 October 1954.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the contribution made by the Federal German Government to British forces stationed in Berlin as part of the allied military forces there.

Mr. Renton: The estimated contribution to the cost of British Forces Berlin by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1985-86 will be £98·7 million.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total amount of funds provided by the Federal German Government

towards the military establishments provided by the United Kingdom in West Berlin; and how much was provided by the United Kingdom for the past three years.

Mr. Renton: It is estimated that the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany have paid the following in respect of British forces Berlin:

	£ million
1983-84	71·8
1984-85	82·3
1985-86	98·7

The cost to the United Kingdom of maintaining ground forces in Berlin is estimated to be:

	£ million
1983-84	42
1984-85	47
1985-86	49

The costs to the United Kingdom of maintaining the small Royal Air Force presence in Berlin cannot be separately identified.

Grenada

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with Grenada.

Mr. Renton: Our relations with Grenada, a fellow member of the Commonwealth, are warm and friendly. We welcomed the return of elected, parliamentary Government to Grenada in December 1984, and we are playing our part, together with other aid donors, in assisting recovery of the Grenadian economy.

The Prime Minister of Grenada, the Hon. Herbert Blaize, visited London as our guest from 18 to 25 May. It was a successful visit, which further strengthened our relationship.

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have raised with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the question of the relocation programme of Salvadorean refugees from the Honduras border back to El Salvador.

Mr. Renton: Her Majesty's ambassador in Tegucigalpa maintains regular contact on all refugee matters in Honduras with the local representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Since 1983, we have given over £1 million to UNHCR and other relief organisations for humanitarian programmes in central America. We have also contributed about £725,043 to such work through the European Community.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the two Salvadorean army officers are coming to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: No dates have yet been fixed.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Rifkind: The usual written forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. Heads of State and Government will meet at the European Council in Milan on 28 and 29 June. At present ten meetings of the Council of Ministers are scheduled for June.

The Industry Council is meeting today (3 June) to discuss progress on the Community action plan for telecommunications; a proposed programme for research and development in advance communications technologies for Europe (RACE); the Community's attitude to competing satellite systems; and a declaration of intention to consider establishing a legal framework for the protection of semi-conductor chip design. Ministers may also discuss preliminary work for compiling a directory of member states' present testing and approval arrangements; proposals to remove the competitive disadvantage which Community sugar and starch regimes impose on the European biotechnology industries; and certain proposals on direct broadcasting by satellite (DBS) transmission standards and reception protection measures.

The Education Council is meeting today (3 June) to discuss a draft Resolution on equality of opportunity for boys and girls in education; conclusions on the European dimension in education; co-operation in higher education as a basis for Community future policy and co-operation between Higher Education and Industry; the recognition of the doctorate of the European University Institute of Florence; and its future work programme.

The Research Council is due to meet on 4 June to discuss a number of research and development topics including the tritium handling laboratory; the European synchrotron radiation laboratory (which supplies an intense source of X-rays for use in a range of scientific research fields); a programme for research and development in advance communications technologies for Europe (RACE); and an idea to encourage the use of information technologies as an aid to improve the social welfare of society (IRIS).

The Internal Market Council is expected to meet on 10 June to discuss the draft directives on the rights of establishment of architects, the mutual recognition of qualifications and rights of establishment of pharmacists, and the co-ordination of laws relating to self-employed commercial agents. Ministers will also consider the Commission's proposed timetable for the completion of the internal market and may consider the draft regulation to establish an European economic interest grouping.

The Economic and Finance Council is expected to meet on 11 June to discuss implemention of budget discipline in relation to the 1986 budgetary procedures. It will also consider the European monetary system; the draft 20th value added tax directive which deals with compensation payments for German farmers; the progress report of the unit trust directive concerning the harmonisation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions; and discuss employment in preparation for the next European Council. Ministers may also consider the Euratom lending ceiling.

The Agriculture Council is expected to meet on 11 and 12 June to complete its discussions on the Commission's price proposals for cereals and rapeseed.

The Labour and Social Affairs Council is due to meet on 13 June to consider the draft decision on the comparability of vocational training qualifications; draft amendments to the regulation on social security; a draft regulations on social security in Greenland; and the draft resolution on a Community migration policy. Ministers will also discuss the draft directives on industrial noise, parental leave, occupational social security schemes and self-employed women and women in agriculture. The draft "Vredeling" directive, the draft directive on part-time work, the European social fund regional statistical mechanism and the draft recommendation on voluntary workers overseas are also likely to be discussed.

The Foreign Affairs Council is due to meet on 18 and 19 June to consider the Commission's draft regulation on integrated Mediterranean programmes (IMPs), revised in the light of the agreement reached at the 29 and 30 March European Council; and preparations for the 28 and 29 June European Council. Ministers will also prepare the Community positions for the EC/Israel co-operation council and for the EC/Yugoslavia co-operation council, both of which are due to be held in the margins, and for the EC/ACP joint council which is due to meet in Luxembourg on 21 June. It may discuss a draft negotiating mandate for an EC/central America co-operation agreement and may review developments in current difficulties between the Community and the United States in the steel sector.

The Energy Council is expected to meet on 20 June to discuss the Commission's proposals for new programmes of support for energy demonstration projects and projects for technological development in the hydrocarbon sector; the review of energy pricing policy; the Commission paper on oil refining; state aids for the coal industry; possibly new Community energy objectives for 1995.

The Environment Council is likely to meet on 25 June to consider a draft directive to tighten existing limits on vehicle exhaust emissions, in line with the agreement reached at the last meeting of the Council; a draft directive on the control of emissions from large combustion plant; a new Commission proposal on trade in seal products; the draft directive to control the discharge of dangerous waste into water; and a Commission proposal to extend the scope of an existing directive so as to prohibit entirely the marketing and use of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and polychlorinated terphynols (PCTs).

SCOTLAND

Female Remands

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State of Scotland what was the average period of custodial remand for female custodial remand prisoners in Scotland for the years 1982, 1983, and 1984.

Mr. Ancram The estimated average period of custodial remand for female prisoners received on remand in Scotland during 1982 was 18 days, and for 1983 was 16 days. Information for 1984 is not yet available.

Female Prisoners

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average length of custodial sentence of female prisoners in Scotland in each of the years 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Ancram: The table provides information on the average length of sentence of female prisoners received into custody under sentence in the years 1982 and 1983. Information for 1984 is not yet available.

No. of Days

	1982	*1983*
Adult direct receptions	105	106
Under 21 direct receptions	68	86
Fine defaulter receptions	16	16
Total	52	48

Note: excludes life and other indeterminate sentences.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Younger: The Information sought could only be provided at disproportionate cost. However, a sample scrutiny of records relating to part of Session 1983-84 indicates that holding replies account for approximately 1·5 per cent. of all written answers. The records on which the sample scrutiny is based do not differentiate between priority written and ordinary written replies.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: The number of questions answered by Scottish Office Ministers is shown in the table.

Session	*House of Commons*		*House of Lords*
	**Oral*	*†Written*	
1981-82	447	1,602	104
1982-83	288	1,229	38
1983-84	493	2,537	155
1984-85 (22 May 1985)	215	1,143	56

Source: POLIS.

* The count represents the total number of oral questions actually reached with supplementaries counted as separate questions.

† The count includes all priority and ordinary written questions, plus those orals questions which were not reached. Additionally those followed by substantive replies at a later date, are counted as two questions.

Elderly Persons

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the 10 areas in Scotland with the highest incidence of elderly people in the population.

Mr. John MacKay: The 10 districts or islands areas with the highest percentage of resident population of pensionable age at 30 June 1984 are as follows. The Scotland figure is shown for comparison.

District or Islands Area	*Percentage of pensionable age**
Wigtown	22
Berwickshire	22
Tweeddale	22
Sutherland	22
Skye & Lochalsh	22
Roxburgh	22
Ettrick & Lauderdale	21
Western Isles	21
North East Fife	21
Argyll & Bute	20
Scotland	17

* Males 65 and over; Females 60 and over.

Rates

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give an estimate of the likely cost that would arise under the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill if the level at which relief was given is 2·5 times or 2·75 times the previous rating valuations.

Mr. Younger: I do not have the information on which to base a reliable estimate, and to ask the rating authorities to do the calculations specially does not seem to me a worthwhile use of resources. It is clear, however, since the average revaluation multiplier for all domestic property in Scotland is 2·7, that if the threshold for revaluation rate rebates were reduced to the levels suggested, there would be a very large increase in the numbers qualifying, and a substantial increase in the rebate costs, and in the administrative costs.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the percentage increases in total valuation for domestic and commercial subjects, respectively, arising from the recent revaluation for each rating authority in Scotland and for Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Younger: The percentage increases in total rateable values between 1 April 1984 and 1 April 1985 are given in the table.

	Domestic	*Commercial*
Borders	180	170
Central	160	130
Dumfries & Galloway	170	190
Fife	150	140
Grampian	180	180
Highland	160	160
Lothian	170	110
Strathclyde	170	110
Tayside	170	130
Orkney	160	70
Shetland	170	50
Western Isles	150	190
Scotland	170	130

These figures include the effect of adding new subjects to and deleting old subjects from the valuation rolls, and of changes to the classification of subjects, as well as the revaluation.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of domestic and commercial ratepayers, respectively, for each rating authority in Scotland and for Scotland as a whole and his estimate of the number and percentage in each category in each authority and for Scotland as a whole who are likely to benefit from the provisions in the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. Younger: Complete information in the detail requested is not yet available. An estimate of the number of properties which might qualify and of the cost of rebates in Scotland as a whole is contained in the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill.

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage reduction in the total rates burden for domestic and commercial ratepayers, respectively, in each rating authority and for Scotland as a whole he estimates will result from the relief provided for in the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. Younger: This information is not available.

PAYMASTER GENERAL

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General, how many Parliamentary questions have been answered by him in the last Session, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I became Paymaster General in September last year. Since then I have answered four oral questions, one ordinary written question and one priority written question.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Bankruptcies

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many bankruptcies have been notified to his Department in each year since 1979.

Dr. Boyson: Following is the information:

Year	*Bankruptcies*
1979	24
1980	29
1981	54
1982	60
1983	67
1984	102
1985 Jan/ April	48

Female Prisoners

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average length of custodial sentence of female prisoners in Northern Ireland in each of the years 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Scott: The information for determinate custodial sentences for females is as follows:

Year	Average (months)
1982	7·9
1983	8·3
1984	4·3

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average period of custodial remand for female custodial remand prisoners in Northern Ireland for the years 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Scott: The average number of days spent in custody from first remand to termination of trial, for females tried on indictment in 1983 and 1984, was 125·5 and 105·4 respectively. A comparable figure for 1982 is not available.

Messrs Hyster

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has had negotiations with Messrs. Hyster, prior to the announcement last week of the location of its new European plant; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: The Industrial Development Board made contact with the president of Hyster in June of last year following rumours of a possible new European project. At that stage the company gave no indication of such a project. Contact was maintained and in December it became evident that the company was considering a manufacturing operation for component parts, possibly in the Republic of Ireland. The Industrial Development Board followed up with the company the possibility of a Northern Ireland location for this investment but Hyster made it clear that it had already ruled out a United Kingdom location. The company has now decided to locate the plant in Holland.

Emergency Provisions Legislation (Detentions)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were detained under the Emergency Provisions (Northern Ireland) Acts in each year since 1973.

Mr. Scott: The information is available for the following years only.

Year	Number of persons arrested by HM forces	Number of persons arrested by Royal Ulster Constabulary
1978 (from 1 June)	1,884	1,186
1979	2,572	2,035
1980	1,629	1,719
1981	1,993	2,555
1982	1,288	1,901
1983	476	1,222
1984	241	1,326
1985 (to 30 April)	34	384

Note: Persons initially arrested by members of HM forces and handed over to the Royal Ulster Constabulary may be subsequently re-arrested by the police and so appear in both sets of figures.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Dr. Boyson: 207 or 36 per cent. and 138 or 32 per cent. respectively.

Source: Departmental statistics.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Deartment in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: Following is the information:

	Oral*	Priority written	Ordinary Written
1981-82	176	244	493
1982-83	174	248	449
1983-84	240	585	941
1984-85†	229	505	406

* Includes all questions tabled, whether reached or not, but does not include supplementaries.

† Up to and including 24 May 1985.

Source: Departmental statistics.

Plastic Bullet Weapons

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether his Department has any plans to replace the plastic bullet weapons currently used in Northern Ireland with the Arwen 37 plastic bullet gun.

Mr. Scott: No.

Housing

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many houses the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has at Portaferry, Kircubbin, and Portavogie; what is the present waiting list at each of these three locations; and what is the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's future building programme at each of these three locations.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that the information is not readily available; I shall reply to the right hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Commercial Explosives

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of commercial explosives recovered in Ulster can be traced back to the Irish Republic; and if he will define this in terms of weight.

Mr. Hurd: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Home-made Explosives

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of the component elements for home-made explosives recovered in Ulster can be traced back to the Irish Republic; and if he will define this in terms of weight.

Mr. Hurd: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many incidents in the frontier area of Ulster during the past three years can be directly related to terrorist incursions from the Irish Republic; and if he will list these;

(2) how many incidents in the frontier area of Ulster during the past three years can be directly related to terrorist activity from within the Irish Republic; and if he will list these;

(3) how many formal apologies Her Majesty's Government have received from the Irish Republic's Government during the past three years concerning terrorist incursions or activity emanating from their territory.

Mr. Hurd: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Killeen (Bomb Incident)

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the official statement from Dublin that the Killeen bomb was not detonated from within the Irish Republic was made in response to any specific allegation that it had been; and whether it has been possible to establish conclusively the detonation point.

Mr. Hurd: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Policing Policy

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals for future policing within Ulster have been discussed with the Irish Republic's Government; who has taken part in these discussions; if the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has been consulted; and whether he agrees with these proposals.

Mr. Hurd: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Lear Fan Ltd.

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the implications of the decision of Lear Fan Ltd. to cease trading.

Dr. Boyson: On 23 May the board of directors of Lear Fan Limited resolved at a meeting in Los Angeles to cease trading.

I understand the directors took this decision because of continuing delays encountered in obtaining certification of the Lear Fan 2100 aircraft and the steep decline in the market for executive turbo-prop aircraft which had resulted in a serious deterioration of the long-term prospects of the company.

On 28 May the company indicated that it would be making an appropriate filing under the United States bankruptcy code. On 29 May the Government appointed Mr. Michael Jordan of Cork Gully as receiver under Her Majesty's Government's first fixed and floating charge to secure the company's assets in Northern Ireland and to represent the Government's interests in the assets and technology in the United States.

At 23 May 1985, a sum of $4·79 million was still to be provided by the Government, under the 1982 financial assistance agreement. As a result of the company's decision to cease trading the Government were released from this remaining funding commitment. The private investment consortium, Zoysia Corporation (since 1982 principal shareholders in the holding company of Lear Fan Ltd.), had, earlier, fulfilled all its funding commitments under the 1982 Agreement.

The amounts committed by Her Majesty's Government to the Lear Fan Project are as follows:

Funding prior to September 1982	£25.32 million
Under the September 1982 Agreement	£17·87 million

In addition, between 1980 and 1985, payment of non-selective assistance under training, temporary short-time working, keyworkers, security staff and redundancy payment schemes were made totalling—£1·28 million.

On 28 May the Ulster Investment Bank recalled its loan to the company of $15 million (£11·81 million pounds sterling). This loan had been guaranteed by the Government in July 1980 and the guarantee was renewed in October 1982 as part of the September 1982 financial assistance agreement. With repayment of this guarantee the total amount investment by Her Majesty's Government in the Lear Fan project is £56·28 million. Private investment since 1979 totals about $100 million.

The receiver will advise the Government as to the value of the company's assets but it is already clear that the company has no major financial resources from which a substantial proportion of the total investment could be recovered. The position with regard to the technology is complex involving the Government and other parties. The Government are taking legal advice on this matter.

The sums invested by the Government and the private sector essentially represented venture capital in development of a high-technology project. It is a great disappointment that the company was not able to overcome the technical problems within the timescale required for a successful commercial development.

The failure cannot in any way be blamed on the Northern Ireland work force. Indeed, its loyalty and contribution to the project is to be praised. Had this high-risk venture, which has involved substantial private investment, succeeded, it would have contributed greatly to employment and to the economy of Northern Ireland.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Draize Eye Irritancy Test

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations he has received since 1 January concerning the Draize eye irritancy test; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I have received 13 representations this year. I would refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 15 April and my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Mr. Body) on 22 April respectively.

Beef

Mr. Beggs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the cost to beef producers in Northern Ireland of delays in export refund payments made by the Intervention Board for Agriculture; and if he will give a figure for the cost per head of cattle sold.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary on 9 May at column *494*.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Beggs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied that all stores for intervention grain in Great Britain are vermin and weather-proof.

Mr. MacGregor: Intervention stores are required to have adequate protection against weather and pests. They are inspected before grain is taken in and periodically during storage.

Mr. Beggs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the normal period during which intervention grain is held in storage in Great Britain.

Mr. MacGregor: Intervention grain has remained in store in Great Britain for varying periods in recent seasons, reflecting changes in domestic and world supply and demand for grain.

Mr. Beggs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the present cost per tonne per month for storage of intervention grain.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard) on 7 March at column *567*.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Jopling: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date: if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The information requested is as follows:

	Session			
	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	**1984-85*
Questions tabled as Oral	316	209	403	227
Questions tabled as priority written	434	287	700	469
Questions tabled as written	552	363	713	586
Total	1,302	859	1,816	1,282

* As at 17 May 1985

Source: Departmental statistics. It should be noted that the count produced by the POLIS system in the House Library will differ from the above figures, in that on POLIS:

(a) the oral count includes only those oral questions actually reached, plus supplementaries counted as separate questions, and

(b) the written count includes orals not reached, writtens, priority writtens and holding replies all counted as separate questions.

The overall POLIS count will therefore exceed the Departmental count.

Pigmeat

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much pigmeat is consumed per head of population in the United Kingdom at the present time; what were the corresponding figures for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The information requested is as follows:

*Consumption of pigmeat in the United Kingdom**

kg/head

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*†1984*
Pork	12·5	12·7	13·0	13·2	12·4
Bacon and Ham	9·1	8·8	8·4	8·4	8·3

* Supplies for consumption adjusted for stock changes but excluding net imports of pigmeat in processed products.
Estimates are in terms of product weight.
† Provisional.

Alachlor

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the carcinogenicity, replacement studies, clearance and use of Alachlor.

Mrs. Fenner: Further to my reply to the hon. Member on 27 March 1985, the clearance and uses of alachlor have been subjected to a preliminary review by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. The committee concluded that the existing required safety precautions were adequate for its current limited United Kingdom uses and recommended reducing clearance to the provisional commercial level pending detailed assessment of the replacement data. The recommendation has been accepted and the assessment is proceeding.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for setting performance targets and quantitative criteria and for publishing threshold pest infestation levels for spraying in relation to pesticide use.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department's Agricultural Development and Advisory Service already operate a comprehensive weekly pest and disease intelligence service which indicates in particular where pests have not reached a threshold and where spraying would not be justified.

The present MAFF research and development programme is strongly oriented towards the determination of economic damage thresholds for the major pests and diseases. Collecting this type of biological information uses considerable resources and thresholds have to be validated over several seasons. We now have the

information for a number of pests including wheat bulb fly, leatherjackets, cereal aphids, several oilseed rape pests, flea moths and the major pests of apples.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the introduction of criteria of efficacy under the Food and Environment Protection Bill will enable the Government to assess from year to year whether or not the policy of reducing pesticide usage to a minimum consistent with food production is being achieved.

Mrs. Fenner: The Government's intention is that the introduction of efficacy criteria into statutory arrangements for the pre-market screening of pesticides will contribute towards reducing pesticide usage to the minimum consistent with efficient food production. It will enable Ministers to ensure that no pesticide is released into the environment unless its use is demonstrably beneficial to agriculture, horticulture, food storage, wood preservation or public health and hygiene.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information has been received from the West German Government regarding the prohibition of Paraquat in that country; and what steps are being taken to perpetuate the long-term experiment involving Paraquat application to soils at the Yarnton weed research laboratory.

Mrs. Fenner: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his Department will begin to review each pesticide with existing clearance under the pesticides safety precaution scheme, in relation to carcinogenicity, mutagenicity and teratogenicity.

Mrs. Fenner: The Government already keep pesticides under review in relation to all aspects of safety including those listed by the hon. Member. We intend to introduce a system of regular reviews of all pesticides under the proposed statutory arrangements and this will commence as soon as the necessary statutory provisions are in place.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what exent his Department relies on farmers taking advice on the use of pesticides from agrochemical merchants and their representatives.

Mrs. Fenner: My Department's Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) offers advice on site to individual farmers and supplements this with promotional events, press articles and provision of a wide range of advisory literature. Nevertheless, we support the British agrochemical standards inspection scheme which ensures by examination that distributors' staff are adequately trained in crop protection and competent to give advice.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will estimate the environmental cost of pesticides in use and their health and safety effect on the environment.

Mrs. Fenner: I regret that the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Nicholson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now allocate the total quota released to date by the United Kingdom outgoers scheme to all exceptional hardship cases and to small producers equally throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jopling: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions since 1982 farmers in the less-favoured areas have been refused hill livestock compensatory allowances on all or part of their flocks, on the grounds that stocking levels are causing damage to semi-natural vegetations and wildlife communities; and whether any farms refused such allowances were situated in either a site of special scientific interest or a national park.

Mr. MacGregor: I regret that information in the form requested is not available.

Food Storage

Mr. Nellist asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in relation to the storage of surplus European Economic Community foodstuffs in Coventry and Warwickshire, he will give the latest information as to (i) location of store, (ii) nature of commodity, (iii) quantity of commodity and (iv) value of commodity, all at the latest available date.

Mr. Jopling: Intervention food stocks in Coventry and Warwickshire on 30 April, the latest date for which figures are available, were as shown, values calculated at the buying-in price for that date.

		Tonnes	*£*
Beef	Nuneaton	45	131,000
	Warwick	52	151,000
Butter	Nuneaton	1,140	2,200,000
Breadwheat	Coventry	2,119	283,000

State Aid

Mr. Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list the applications made by him for a derogation by the Council of Ministers under article 93 of the Treaty of Rome.

Mr. Jopling: There have been none.

"Devon Ray"

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, (1) pursuant to the answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, column *363*, what are the implications of the requirements of the Fishing Vessel (Financial Assistance) Scheme 1983 in respect of the 'Devon Ray'; and what further steps are required so that the Devon Ray satisfies the decommissioning within the terms of the scheme;

(2) what specific steps have not been fulfilled by Mr. Wakeham in relation to the 'Devon Ray', which are preventing it being decommissioned within the requirements of the Fishing Vessel (Financial Assistance) Scheme 1983.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 May 1985, c. 582]: The specific steps not fulfilled are those discussed with the solicitors acting for Mr. Wakeham in November 1984 and confirmed by us in writing on 5 December 1984. These are: conversion work on the galley, the deck saloon and the wheelhouse to the satisfaction of the local district inspector.

WALES

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In the Parliamentary Sessions 1983-84 and 1984-85 to date the number and percentage of priority written questions receiving a holding reply are 13 (1·5 per cent.) and three (0·6 per cent.) respectively.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break down these figures into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information requested is as follows:

Session	*Oral*	*Priority written*	*Ordinary written*	*Total*
1981-82	122	361	498	981
1982-83	77	300	399	776
1983-84	296	851	724	1,871
1984-85*	166	465	237	868

* To 24 May 1985.

Source: Departmental statistics. It should be noted that the count produced by the POLIS system in the House Library will differ from the above figures, in that on POLIS

(a) the oral count includes only those oral questions actually reached, plus supplementaries counted as separate questions, and

(b) the written count includes Orals not reached, Writtens, Priority Writtens and holding replies all counted as separate Questions.

The overall POLIS count will therefore exceed the departmental count.

Dogs (Sheep Deaths)

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many sheep have been killed by dogs in Wales during the last six months; what were the corresponding figures for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Statistics of sheep reported killed by dogs ceased to be kept centrally after 1978.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of civil servants employed in his Department *(a)* in Cardiff and *(b)* in London, respectively, are (i) specialists and (ii) administrators; and how many in each office speak Welsh.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The following is the information requested:

Percentage of total Welsh Office staff in post as at 1 May 1985

	Percentage
Staff employed in London	
1. Staff other than administrators	
(a) Professional and technical staff	0·05
(b) Support staff	0·45
2. Administrators	1·00
Staff employed in Cardiff	
1. Staff other than administrators	
(a) Professional and technical staff	11·7
(b) Support staff	10·6
2. Administrators	45·3

A total of two officers employed in London and 145 officers in Cardiff speak Welsh.

Cardigan Bypass

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to build the Cardigan bypass within the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: The provisional programme envisages that the bypass should be ready to start in 1988 subject to satisfactory completion of engineering design and of the statutory procedures. The actual start will depend on the availability of resources.

Business Grants

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how long, on average, it takes for a new business in Wales to receive *(a)* a definite decision upon application for Government grant-aid and *(b)* Government grant-aid upon successful application, from the date at which the application was made.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: A wide range of Government grants provided for by different statutory powers is potentially available to new businesses in Wales. These grants involve differing methods of appraisal, approval and payment. Information in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales by how much in real terms the budget of the Development Board for Rural Wales has increased between 1980-81 and 1984-85; and if he will list the moneys given to the Development Board for Rural Wales in each of the financial years 1980-81 to 1984-85.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend on 26 November 1984 at column *345* for details of the Development Board for Rural Wales' outturn expenditure for the period 1980-81 — 1983-84 and financial allocation for 1984-85. As explained in the reply comparison in the terms asked for is not directly possible. Government programmes are no longer planned on a constant price basis. However, by applying the gross domestic product deflator and at 1983-84 prices, the figures for 1980-81 and 1984-85 would be £9·5 million and £9·3 million respectively.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the anticipated volume of outgoers quota required to restore to base year production levels the quotas of small milk producers in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply he was given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, on 20 May 1985 at column *354*. Separate figures, for England and Wales could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what amount of milk quota is required to meet 100 per cent. exceptional hardship awards made by the dairy produce tribunals for Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Separate figures for Wales are not available and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which a local authority may (i) withhold housing benefit from an assessed recipient if it is shown that the recipient is not paying rent to the landlord in private rented property and (ii) pay housing benefit directly to a landlord of an assessed recipient as rent in the event of non-payment of rent when the recipient does not consent to such a course of action.

Mr. Whitney: The housing benefits regulations provide that a local authority may withhold payment of a rent allowance if it is satisfied that the claimant is not paying his rent regularly. Payment will be reinstated when the authority is satisfied that the claimant will discharge, on receipt of the money, his liability to his landlord.

A rent allowance may be paid direct to the landlord without the tenant's consent if the tenant is 13 weeks, or more, in arrears with his rent. Payment must be made direct to the landlord where an authority has been notified that the DHSS local office is paying to the landlord an amount towards arrears, deducted from the claimant's supplementary benefit.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names of the members of the Suffolk family practitioner committee giving their professional occupations and length of service on the committee.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The following members were appointed to the newly constituted Suffolk FPC on 1 April 1985. The dates in brackets are the dates of appointment to earlier committees.

Name	*Occupation*
Mr. Arthur Nicholls *(Chairman)*	Management consultant (1974)
Mr. Joseph A. Bird	Solicitor (1974)
Mr. Michael L. Butterworth	General dental practitioner (1982)
Mrs. Alison E. Child	Housewife (1981)
Dr. Ronald Duncan	General medical pratitioner (1983)
Dr. Thomas H. Fairbairn	General medical practitioner (1960)
Mrs. Marion S. Fairman-Smith	Organiser: Newmarket day centre
Mrs. Joan M. Gibbs	Housewife
Dr. Brian M. Goss	General medical practitioner
Mr. Canham J. J. Grayston	Retired
Mr. Martin Holmes	Farmer (1984)
Ms. Eileen M. Jacob	Housewife
Mr. Adrian Kitchener	Dispensing optician
Dr. Walter Marshall	General medical practitioner (1973)
Dr. David S. Meldrum	General medical practitioner (1974)
Councillor Sir MacDonald Miller of Glenlee (Bt)	Retired (1982)
Mr. Anthony S. Owen	Solicitor
Mr. Forbes A. Powrie	Pharmacist (1984)
Mr. Alfred W. Reeve	Assistant director of social services
Mr. Peter I. M. Ross	Ophthalmic optician (1971)
Dr. Kailash Sarda	General medical practitioner (1983)
Mr. Arthur J. Sheels	Artist
Mrs. Violet O. Smith	Retired
Mr. John W. Taylor	Pharmacist
Dr. Ian R. Wallace	General medical practitioner (1975)
Mr. Wilfred Watkin	General dental practitioner (retired) (1957-72)
Mrs. Elizabeth M. Wiles	Housewife
Mr. Kenneth V. Williams	General dental practitioner (1974)

The places reserved for a nurse and for an ophthalmic medical practitioner and one of the generalist places are vacant at present.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has concluded his considerations relating to the possible changes in the procedure of family practitioner committees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have introduced a number of procedural changes since the enactment of the Health and Social Security Act 1984. These are covered by:

Procedural considerations	
FPC Accountability	HC (FP) (84) 37
Financial information systems	HC (FP) (84) 6
Financial directors	HC (FP) (84) 9
Arrangements for personnel	HC (FP) (85) 12
Annual accounts	HC (FP) (85) 4
Internal audit	HC (FP) (85) 6
Losses and special payments	HC (FP) (85) 7
FPCs (Establishment) Order 1984 (SI 1984 No. 1946)	HC (FP) (85) 1
FPCs Establishment Order 1985 (SI 1985 No. 301)	HC (FP) (85) 5
FPCs (Consequential Modifications) Order 1985 (SI 1985 No. 39)	HC (FP) (85) 2
FPCs (Membership and Procedure) Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 213)	HC (FP) (85) 3
FPC Accommodation and equipment	HN (FP) (84) 38
Community Health Councils Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 304)	HC (85) 11
Joint Consultative Committees Order 1985 (SI 1985 No. 305)	HC (FP) (85) 8
Management arrangements for FPCs	HC (FP) (85) 10

The framework for the new family practitioner committees is now established but I cannot say that procedural considerations are complete. They may need amendment from time to time to take account of reviews of FPC performance and of policy developments.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the family practitioner committees in England which regularly publish annual reports.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The following family practitioner committees regularly publish annual reports:

Avon
Birmingham
Bromley
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
City and East London
Croydon
Cumbria
Durham
East Sussex
Greenwich and Bexley
Hampshire
Hereford and Worcester
Hertfordshire
Kent
Kirklees
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Liverpool
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth
Newcastle
Norfolk
North Yorkshire
Nottinghamshire
Oxford
St. Helens and Knowsley
Sandwell
Sheffield
Stockport
Suffolk
Tameside
Walsall
Warwickshire
West Sussex
Wolverhampton

In future, under arrangements introduced this year, all family practitioner committees will be required to identify their aims and policies and report annually on progress in achieving them. I expect a clear explanation of this information to be published by each FPC.

Overseas Visitors (Health Treatment)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total amount of money received in payment for health service treatment by overseas visitors to the United Kingdom in 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The latest available information is on an income basis, rather than cash received, and relates to the financial year 1983-84, in which income in the United Kingdom from patients resident overseas was just under £2 million.

Drugs

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many instances of failures under the drug testing scheme were attributable to defective generic medicinal products;

(2) how many instances of failures under the drug testing scheme were attributable to defective proprietary medicinal products.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not hold this information centrally.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many instances of failures under the regional health authority quality control laboratories scheme were attributable to defective generic medicinal products;

(2) how many instances of failures under the regional health authority quality control laboratories scheme were attributable to defective proprietary medicinal products.

Mr. John Patten: We are not aware of the regional health authority quality control laboratories scheme to which the hon. Member refers.

NHS Hospitals (Fires)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many fires occurred in National Health Service hospitals in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. John Patten: The readily available information relates to fires in hospitals (including Nursing homes and non-NHS hospitals) in 1980-83. The information is published by the Home Office in "Fire Statistics United Kingdom". Figures for such fires in 1980-1983 are:

	Number
1980	2,106
1981	2,081
1982	2,213
1983	2,243

The figure for 1984 is not yet available.

Information on National Health Service hospitals alone could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Hip Replacement

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each district health authority in England the current waiting list for a total hip replacement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not collected centrally. Information on waiting lists for admission to hospital is available centrally the speciality of treatment and not by operation.

Generic Medicines

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he remains satisfied with the quality of generic medicines available for National Health Service patients.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes. I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 4 December 1984 to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas) at column *163*.

Queen Elizabeth II Hospital (Welwyn)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the proposed expansion of the Queen Elizabeth II hospital in Welwyn garden city is expected to commence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: This is a matter for the North-West Thames regional health authority to decide. I suggest my hon. Friend writes to the chairman of that authority for the information he requires.

Pirate Radio (Advertising)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the advertisement for his Department and its services on the pirate Skyline radio at 7.28 pm on Monday 13 May was solicited or paid for by his Department; what steps he is taking to stop or encourage further broadcasts of this type; and whether he

will make a statement on the broadcasting of his Department's public service announcements on pirate radios.

Mr. Whitney: We were unaware of the advertisement broadcast on the unlicensed broadcasting station Skyline Radio on Monday 13 May. Certainly neither this Department nor the Central Office of Information, which originates and distributes public service announcements on behalf of Government Departments for free broadcast, would consider paying for or soliciting advertising on any unlicensed broadcasting station.

As the hon. Member knows, action on the unlicensed use of radio is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

"International Years" (Funding)

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what funding his Department has given in each year since 1979 to *(a)* international year of the child, *(b)* international year of the disabled and *(c)* international youth year.

Mr. John Patten: The Department has supported a wide range of projects and initiatives connected with the international year of the child, the international year of the disabled, and international youth years through, for example, grants to voluntary organisations, funding of conferences, publications and research and the servicing of co-ordinating committees; I regret that this expenditure cannot, however, be separately identified.

Dental Ailments

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many man hours his Department estimates to have been lost through dental ailments during each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is not possible to provide a comprehensive estimate of the number of man hours lost through dental disease. The only statistics available relate to those claiming sickness benefit in respect of dental and oral conditions in the period to 1982-83. The following number of days of certified incapacity through this cause for periods of four days or more were recorded in the last five years for which we have statistics:

	Days
1978-79	733,000
1979-80	866,000
1980-81	761,000
1981-82	664,000
1982-83	642,000

Preventive Dentistry

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what evaluation his Department is undertaking in respect of preventative dentistry techniques.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A joint working party drawn from our Department and the British Dental Association is currently considering the potential effectiveness of fissure sealants in relation to the general dental services.

Restorative Dentistry

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent by the National Health Service on restorative dentistry in each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The estimated gross cost of restorative dentistry provided under the general dental service in each of the last five years was as follows:

	£ million
1980	190·01
1981	225·20
1982	249·77
1983	256·50
1984	282·10

We cannot separately identify the costs of restorative treatment provided under the community and hospital dental services.

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service patients were treated for restorative dentistry in each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have information on the number of patients treated for restorative dentistry. The number of treatments provided under the general and community dental services in each of the last 5 years was as follows:

Year	*General dental service*	*Community dental service*
1980	13,840,190	2,518,174
1981	13,855,230	2,272,519
1982	13,972,780	2,052,837
1983	14,029,890	1,817,338
1984	14,077,180	n.a.

The available information relating to restorative dentistry provided under the hospital dental service is as follows:

Year	*In-patient cases*	*Day cases*	*New out-patient attendances*
1980	—	247	20,505
1981	8	115	27,922
1982	34	179	42,549
1983	47	188	42,350
1984	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

These figures exclude treatment provided in hospitals by general dental practitioners.

Mentally Disordered Offenders

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to ensure that regional health authorities accept mentally disordered offenders into their care under the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have met representatives of each regional health authority to discuss their obligation to provide a comprehensive system of care for mentally disordered people, including offenders. The Mental Health Act 1983 did not provide courts with powers to direct regional health authorities to accept a mentally disordered offender into their care, but it did provide them with power, under section 39 of the Act, to require regional health authorities to provide them with

information about the facilities available, in their areas or elsewhere, for persons in respect of whom the courts are minded to make a hospital order. In 1984 regional health authorities received requests from courts in respect of 29 such offenders and few difficulties seem to have arisen in finding hospital places for offenders who were detainable under the Mental Health Act. Health authorities have no power to detain other mentally disordered offenders.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many and what percentage of the questions set down on the Order Paper for priority written answer by him in *(a)* Session 1983-84 and *(b)* the current Session to date have initially received a holding reply.

Mr. Fowler: The information requested is as follows:

Questions for priority written answer

Session	Total	Initial Holding Reply	Percentage
(a) 1983-84	4,014	456	11·3
(b) 1984-85*	2,434	319	13·1

* To 24 May.
Source: Departmental Statistics.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many parliamentary questions have been answered by Ministers in his Department in each of the last three complete Sessions, and the current Session to date; if he will break these figures down into questions tabled as oral questions, priority written questions and ordinary written questions, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: The information requested is as follows:

Session	Type of Question			Total
	Oral	Priority Written	Ordinary Written	
1981-82	564	2,210	1,756	4,530
1982-83	416	1,474	1,284	3,174
1983-84	773	4,014	2,967	7,754
1984-85*	357	2,434	1,603	4,394

* To 24 May.
Source: Departmental Statistics.

Elderly Persons

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the 20 areas in England and Wales with the highest incidence of elderly people in the population.

Mr. John Patten: The required information is shown in the table.

Percentage of resident population of pensionable age: 30 June 1983*

Local Authority	Percentage
Worthing (West Sussex)	35
Rother (East Sussex)	35
Eastbourne (East Sussex)	33
Christchurch (Dorset)	32
West Somerset	32
Tendring (Essex)	32
Arun (West Sussex)	31
East Devon	31
Bournemouth (Dorset)	30
Hove (East Sussex)	30
South Wight (Isle of Wight)	30
Torbay (Devon)	30
Thanet (Kent)	28
Colwyn (Clwyd)	28
Teignbridge (Devon)	27
Rhuddlan (Clwyd)	27
Hastings (East Sussex)	26
Wealden (East Sussex)	26
North Norfolk	26
Aberconwy (Gwynedd)	26
England and Wales	18

* Males aged 65 and over, females aged 60 and over.
Source: OPCS Monitor PP1 84/4.

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of health expenditure was accounted for by people over the age of *(a)* 65 years and *(b)* 75 years in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. John Patten: The Department makes estimates of hospital and community health services and family practitioner services expenditure by broad age groups which differ slightly from the breakdown requested. The estimated percentage of total expenditure on these services spent on people aged 65 and over, and those aged 75 and over, for each of the years 1978-79 to 1982-83 is in the table. Estimates for 1983-84 are not yet ready; comparable information for earlier years is not readily available.

England

	Estimated percentage of HCHs and FPS expenditure on people aged	
	(a) 65 and over per cent.	*(b)* 75 and over per cent.
1978-79	39	23
1979-80	41	24
1980-81	42	25
1981-82	42	25
1982-83	42	26

Organophosphorus Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what investigations of the effects of organophosphorus pesticides on the blood serum-cholinesterase levels of the general public living in areas subject to aerial spraying are being or will be conducted or are planned by his Department.

Mr. John Patten: None. Procedures exist for blood to be tested for cholinesterase levels as quickly as possible to enable a full clinical assessment of anyone complaining of exposure to organophosphorus or carbamate pesticides. The Department's booklet—"Pesticide Poisoning: notes for the guidance of medical practitioners" issued to all GPs —and to hospital accident and emergency departments —sets out the relevant advice.

Crop Spraying

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is being made available to the general public living in areas subjected to crop spraying of the health effects of crop spraying.

Mr. John Patten: It would not be practicable to issue such advice to the general public. Properly conducted crop

spraying should not give rise to adverse health effects. However, anyone who is concerned about possible health effects should consult his general practitioner. A booklet — "Pesticide Poisoning: notes for the guidance of medical practitioners"—has been issued to all GPs and to hospital accident and emergency departments.

Islington

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the current number of men and women residing in the London borough of Islington who are in receipt of state retirement pensions.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 22 May to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) at column *470*.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the number of recipients, and the total amounts, of *(a)* death grant, *(b)* maternity allowance, *(c)* special diet supplement and *(d)* special laundry supplement, claimed in the area of north Islington during the past year.

Mr. Whitney: The area of north Islington is served by three local offices: Hoxton, Finsbury Park and Highgate. Figures are not available to show either the number of recipients of death grant, maternity allowance, and additional requirements in supplementary benefit cases for diet or laundry or the total amounts paid.

However, the number of claims for death grant and maternity allowance in the year ending 9 April 1985 were as follows:

	Death Grant	*Maternity Allowance*
Hoxton	797	790
Finsbury Park	883	1,057
Highgate	1,142	1,184
Totals	2,822	3,031

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the number of unemployed young people aged 16 and 17 years currently in receipt of supplementary benefit, and the weekly total amount paid to this age group, in the area of north Islington.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how many families in Islington are eligible for family income supplement.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that this information is not available. Family income supplement claims are dealt with by one centre at Blackpool and no information is maintained about claims from particular local areas.

Cervical Cancer Screening

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, further to his answer of 21 May to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, *Official Report*, column *399*, whether all the family practitioner committees referred to have cervical cancer screening schemes covering all health districts in their areas; how many of the schemes of recall or call in operation or proposed, respectively, cover only women over 35 years; and how many cover younger women as well.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have this detailed local information centrally.

Medical Manpower Units

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take arising from the findings published in the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on hospital-based medical manpower units within the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We will wait for a report from the Public Accounts Committee before deciding whether any action would be justified.

Hospital Consultants

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consultations he intends to seek with chairmen of district and regional health authorities to discuss with them the progress which they have made in implementing the guidelines issued by his Department to increase the proportion of hospital consultants to junior doctors.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This subject could be raised as part of the annual ministerial review process in the case of any region where we considered it a suitable subject for a review of progress.

Drugs Trials

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to be meeting representatives of the Medicines Commission to discuss with them recommendations made by the Royal College of Physicians in respect of legislation to protect healthy people who volunteer for drugs trials.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The report of the Royal College's working party is not expected to become available to the Medicines Commission until the autumn. In the light of that report the commission will reconsider whether there is a need for further safeguards, and will then advise us what action, if any, it considers should be taken.

Paraplegics and Quadraplegics

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to raise the level of treatment facilities within the National Health Service for paraplegics and quadraplegics in domestic or hospital environments.

Mr. Newton: It is for health authorities to determine the level of the provision of services for paraplegics and quadraplegics within the National Health Service having regard to established national policies and priorities.

Home Helps

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many people aged 65 years and over are in receipt of home helps.

Mr. John Patten: Figures on the total number of cases attended during a sample week are collected and published annually by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in its report "Personal Social Services Statistics". Its latest report, which includes returns from only 74 per cent. of social services authorities in England, shows that during the week beginning 7 November 1983 home helps attended a total of 388,159 cases involving people aged 65 years and over.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of hospital beds were occupied by people over the age of *(a)* 65 years and *(b)* 75 years in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is given in the table.

NHS hospitals England

Year	*Estimated percentage of all occupied hospital beds occupied by:* *(a) patients aged 65 and over*	*(b) patients aged 75 and over*
1974	43	25
1975	45	26
1976	46	27
1977	47	28
1978	48	29
1979	48	29
1980	49	30
1981	49	31
1982	50	31
1983 (provisional)	51	33

Population Statistics

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate for the size of the male and female population in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1996 and *(c)* 2001.

Mr. John Patten: The latest projections by the Government Actuary of the population in England and Wales, Great Britain and the United Kingdom for males and females are given in the table.

Mid-1983 based principal Population Projections

thousands

	1991	*1996*	*2001*
Males			
England and Wales	24,457	24,756	24,997
Great Britain	26,904	27,193	27,418
United Kingdom	27,702	28,012	28,251
Females			
England and Wales	25,672	25,895	26,068
Great Britain	28,284	28,486	28,633
United Kingdom	29,115	29,336	29,495

State Pensions

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate for Government expenditure on state pensions in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1996 and *(c)* 2001.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Kidney Dialysis

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people with kidney complaints were receiving dialysis treatment in each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: According to information supplied by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, the number of renal patients receiving dialysis treatment in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years for which figures are available was as follows:

Number of patients on treatment at 31 December

	Number
1978	2,997
1979	3,378
1980	3,825
1981	4,442
1982	4,933

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were refused kidney dialysis treatment in each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available centrally. Whether or not an individual patient is accepted for treatment is a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctors concerned.

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the expenditure on kidney dialysis in each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available centrally.

NHS (Professional Staff)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will break down, by grade and sex, the numbers of staff in the following professions in the National Health Service *(a)* speech therapists, *(b)* clinical psychologists, *(c)* hospital pharmacists, *(d)* medical laboratory scientific officers, *(e)* medical physics technicians and *(f)* physiological measurement technicians.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The figures requested are shown in the table.

NHS scientific and professional staff—England as at 30 September 1983 (whole-time equivalents)†*

Grades	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Speech Therapists			
District Senior Chief	17	—	17
District Chief I	27	—	27
District Chief II	77	3	74
Chief III	110	3	107
Chief IV	211	1	210
Senior I	575	7	568
Senior II	921	16	905
Basic Grade	1	—	1
Diploma Entry	1	—	1
Graduate Entry	2	—	2
Other Speech Therapists‡	29	2	27
Teacher	1	—	1
Total Speech Therapists	1,972	32	1,940
Clinical Psychologists			
Top Grade+	32	26	6

Grades	Total	Male	Female
Top Grade	40	32	8
Principal	250	154	97
Senior	531	231	300
Basic Post Probation	231	83	148
Basic Probationary HQ	191	76	115
Basic Probationary LQ¶	6	2	4
Other Clinical Psychologists‡	27	6	21
Total Clinical Psychologists	1,307	609	697
Hospital Pharmacists			
Regional Pharmacist Officer I	7	6	1
Regional Pharmacist Officer II	6	5	1
District Pharmacist Officer RB01-RB51	98	82	16
Area Pharmacist Officer AT1-A3●	38	33	5
District Pharmacist Officer B	13	10	3
District Pharmacist Officer C	11	6	5
Pharmacist V	11	9	2
Pharmacist Senior IV	11	9	2
Pharmacist IV	69	52	17
Principal Pharmacist	213	143	70
Staff Pharmacist	1,165	503	662
Pharmacist Basic Grade	1,144	299	845
Pre-Reg Pharmacist-Student	360	116	244
Other Pharmacist‡	59	18	41
Total Hospital Pharmacists	3,204	1,291	1,914
Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers			
Principal	89	84	5
Senior Chief	703	653	50
Chief	1,486	1,181	306
Senior	2,312	1,316	997
Basic Grade	5,765	2,185	3,580
Junior B	3,429	984	2,445
Junior A	910	191	719
Other Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer‡	24	11	13
Total Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers	14,718	6,604	8,114
Medical Physics Technicians			
Principal	17	17	—
Technician I	121	116	5
Technician II	449	419	30
Technician III	876	764	112
Technician IV	583	432	151
Junior	70	47	23
Student B	98	53	45
Student A	25	19	6
Other Medical Physics Technician†	2	1	1
Total Medical Physics Technicians	2,241	1,868	374
Physiological Measurement Technicians			
Senior Chief	106	40	66
Chief	225	68	156
Senior	623	100	523
Technician	819	117	702
Student B	304	82	222
Student A	65	14	51
Other Physiological Measurement Technicians‡	7	3	4
Total Physiological Measurement Technicians	2,147	424	1,723

*Latest date for which information validated to this level of detail.
‡Due to rounding the sum of the components may not add to the totals shown.
‡Grade not specified.
†Higher qualification.
¶Lower qualification.
●Protected pay scales.

Central Pensions Branch, Longbenton

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance is currently being given to clerical grades at his Department's central pensions branch at Longbenton about the extent to which they may engage in political activities; and whether this guidance has been recently changed.

Mr. Newton: The extent to which staff may engage in political activities is laid down in the Department's staff rules and staff code. Clerical grades at Longbenton have standing permission to engage in all the national and local political activities open to the intermediate group (as defined in the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code) of which they are a part. Following recent revision of the rules for the Civil Service as a whole the members of this group who have standing permission are required to inform local management of intended political activities prior to taking them up.

Legionnaire's Disease

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if any outbreak of Legionnaire's disease has been reported in any hospitals in the Wirral and Liverpool area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: One isolated case was recently admitted to a Liverpool hospital and Legionnaire's disease was later confirmed. A second suspected case was admitted to a Wirral hospital but the disease has not been confirmed. I am afraid that it appears to be a feature of this disease that isolated sporadic cases occur regularly all over the country and no specific origin of the infection is usually detected.

Southwark

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent on unemployment benefit and other benefits to unemployed people in Southwark in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1981, *(d)* 1982, *(e)* 1983 and *(f)* 1984.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that this information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Sweeteners

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any studies have been undertaken by his Department on the possibility of a relationship existing between the consumption of intense sweeteners at present and projected levels with the incidence of disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia, especially in young people.

Mr. John Patten: We have not undertaken any such studies.

Filipinos

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated Filipino population at present resident in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: Results from the 1981 census show that about 12,000 people born in the Philippines were resident in Great Britain in April 1981.

NHS Hospitals (Private Management)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which district health authorities have been involved in discussions with American corporations regarding the contracting-out of management of National Health Service hospitals; which American corporations were involved in each case; and what stage discussions have reached in each case.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Such discussions do not have to be reported to us. We are aware that Portsmouth and South East Hampshire, and Lewisham and North Southwark health authorities have held preliminary discussions with American Medical International about management of their private patients' wings. We are encouraging innovation and improvement in the management of hospitals and we would look sympathetically at any proposals that emerged from discussions between any health authority and any company with a good track record of hospital management. I cannot see the relevance of the nationality of the company concerned and our judgments would not be affected one way or the other if the ownership of the company happened to be American.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many National Health Service hospital beds have been closed each year since 1979 as a result of the closure of wards within hospitals that still remained open; and in which hospitals these beds were located in each case;

(2) what has been the level of expenditure on the National Health Service each year since 1955; what has been the real increase each year in terms of *(a)* the retail price index and *(b)* National Health Service pay and prices; and what was the level of National Health Service expenditure each year as a percentage of gross national product.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Committee on Safety of Medicines

Mr. Haynes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he is satisfied that, throughout their service, present and past members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines having a connection with a pharmaceutical company have maintained a level of objectivity consistent with their status as committee members; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will indicate the length of service on the Committee on Safety of Medicines of each of its members;

(3) if he will take steps to ensure that the Committee on Safety of Medicines is wholly independent in its membership from the pharmaceutical industry;

(4) how many members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines have any connection, financial or otherwise, with pharmaceutical companies; and if he will name them;

(5) if he will name the organisations employing each member of the Committee on Safety of Medicines;

(6) if he will list the current members of the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 May 1985, c. *545-6*]: The members of the committee are:

Committee Member	*Period of Service (Years)*	*Position Held*
Professor Sir Abraham Goldberg (Chairman) MD DSc FRCP FRSE	5	Regius Professor of the Practice of Medicine Gardiner Institute University of Glasgow
Professor A. W. Asscher BSc MD FRCP	1½	Professor of Renal Medicine University of Wales
Professor A. M. Breckenridge MSc MD FRCP	2¼	Professor of Clinical Pharmacology Liverpool University
Dr. C. M. Castleden MD FRCP	1½	Consultant Geriatrician Leicester General Hospital
Mr. W. M. Darling OBE FPS	5	Community Pharmacist South Tyneside
Professor J. W. Dundee MD PhD FRCP FFARCS	5	Professor of Anaesthetics Queens University Belfast
Professor P. H. Elworthy B Pharm PhD DSc MScChem MRSC FPS MCPP	7	Emeritus Professor of Pharmacy. University of Manchester and visiting Professor in Pharmaceutics at the School of Pharmacy, University of London
Professor A. T. Florence DSc PhD FRSC MPS MCPP	4	Professor of Pharmacy University of Strathclyde
Professor D. G. Grahame-Smith MB BS PhD FRCP	11	Rhodes Professor of Clinical Pharmacology University of Oxford
Professor M. W. Greaves MD PhD FRCP	1½	Professor of Clinical Dermatology St. Johns Hospital for Diseases of the Skin, London
Dr. J. M. Holt MA MSc MD FRCP	5	Consultant Physician John Radcliffe Hospital Oxford

Committee Member	Period of Service (Years)	Position Held
Professor D. Hull BSc FRCP DObst RCOG DCH	4	Professor of Child Health University Hospital & Medical School Nottingham
Professor H. S. Jacobs BA MD FRCP	1½	Professor of Reproductive Endocrinology The Middlesex Hospital Medical School
Dr. B. L. Pentecost MD FRCP	1½	Consultant Physician Birmingham
Professor M. D. Rawlins	6	Professor of Clinical Pharmacology University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Dr. J. W. G. Smith MD FRCPath FFCM FI Biol Dip Bact	7	Director, National Institute for Biological Standards and Controls London
Professor M. P. Vessey MD FFCM FRCP (Ed) FRCGP	7	Professor of Social and Community Medicine University of Oxford
Dr. D. M. B. Ward MB ChB	1½	General Practitioner Glasgow
Professor H. K. Weinbren BSc MD FRCPath	7	Professor of Experimental Pathology Royal Postgraduate Medical School Hammersmith Hospital

I have every reason to believe that members of the committee—for whose work we are most grateful—have maintained the highest level of integrity, objectivity and professional expertise.

Except for the director of the National Institute of Biological Standards and Control, which is a Government-financed body, all members of the committee are employed in the academic and National Health Service fields. It is desirable that members in these fields should have a good understanding of the work of the pharmaceutical industry. Members of the committee were informed at the time of their appointment that they are required to declare to the head of our Department's medicines division, in confidence, any consultancies they hold with pharmaceutical companies. Four members of the present committee have done so. Members are also required to declare any interest which they may have in any application or other matter before the committee, and if the interest is a direct one they take no part in the committee's consideration of this item. All such declarations of interest are recorded in the committee's minutes.

The present members of the committee have all been appointed on the basis that declarations of interest would be regarded as confidential and we propose to respect that confidence. We intend to draw up arrangements however whereby, for future appointments to the committee, information about relevant interests can become a matter of public record. I will make a further statement in due course.

Smoking Diseases

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 17 April, *Official Report*, column *215*, if he will break down the figure of £170 million per annum cost to the NHS of diseases to which smoking is a major contributory factor into the cost of *(a)* inpatient treatment *(b)* outpatient and inpatient treatment and *(c)* family practitioner services.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 May 1985, c. *546-47*]: The figure of £170 million is the estimated cost to the National Health Service of illnesses to which smoking is a major contributory factor. About 85 per cent. of the total is attributable to outpatient and inpatient treatment and 15 per cent. to consultations with general practitioners.

Food Labelling

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why his latest guidelines on food labelling exclude data on carbohydrates and fibre content; and if he will reconsider the possibility of requiring data on these items to be included.

Mrs. Fenner: I have been asked to reply.

We have recently issued draft guidelines on voluntary nutrition labelling which provide for both the carbohydrate and fibre content of foods to be declared.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 4 June 1985

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Cumbria (Alleged Bribery and Corruption)

Mr. Franks asked the Attorney-General (1) why the Director of Public Prosecutions decided not to institute criminal proceedings arising out of the allegations made by a Cumbrian county councillor of attempted bribery and corruption in connection with land for private housing development contained in the Cartmel and Furness local plan prepared by the planning department of the South Lakeland district council;

(2) if he will place in the Library a transcript of the tape recording arranged by the Barrow-in-Furness division of the Cumbria county constabulary and submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions relating to a meeting and conversation with a Cumbrian county councillor during which there was an alleged attempt at bribery and corruption in connection with land for private housing development contained in the Cartmel and Furness local plan;

(3) if he will place in the Library copies of the statements taken by the Cumbrian county constabulary from the chief planning officer and a member of staff on the South Lakeland district council relating to allegations of bribery and corruption concerning the Cartmel and Furness local plan and submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions did not institute criminal proceedings arising out of these allegations because he considered that the evidence did not justify a prosecution. When the Director of Public Prosecutions has reached a decision not to institute criminal proceedings in a particular case it is not his policy to give his reasons or to make the evidence available upon which he reached that decision.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Soccer Transfers

Mr. Greenway asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to impose a 50 per cent. levy on soccer transfers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no plans to impose such a levy.

Departmental Staffs

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff-in-post in central Government Departments at 1 April.

Mr. Peter Rees: At 1 April 1985 there were 599,026 staff-in-post — 497,967 non-industrials and 101,059 industrials the number of civil servants has fallen by 133,249, or 18·2 per cent., since the beginning of the last Parliament.

After adjustment for a revised MOD target, the latest staff-in-post figures show that the 1 April 1985 aggregate target was more than achieved by some 4,700.

Tax Offices (Reorganisation)

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the Inland Revenue's plans for reorganisation of tax offices in the charge of principal inspectors of taxes.

Mr. Moore: An Inland Revenue committee completed last year a review of these offices, which handle much specialised work and deal with the tax liabilities of the largest financial, commercial and industrial concerns. The Board of Inland Revenue has approved the committee's recommendations, the main feature of which is the centralisation of the files for companies in those large groups in a tax district headed by a principal inspector of taxes. In all, around 12,000 files will be centralised, mostly within the central London area. The movement of files will begin shortly and should be substantially completed by March 1986.

Business Expansion Scheme

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the study of the business expansion scheme, commissioned by the Treasury and undertaken by Peat, Marwick and Mitchell.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985]: I intend to publish results from this study in due course. Messrs. Peat, Marwick and Mitchell is due to submit its final report by end October of this year.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the categories of companies benefiting from the business expansion scheme in 1983-84 and 1984-85; and if he will give the number of companies in each category.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985]: It is estimated that at least £100 million was invested under the business expansion scheme in 1983-84 in more than 500 companies. Detailed information is currently available about 397 of these companies. The table analyses them into broad trade group. It is too early to provide similar information about 1984-85 investments.

Companies receiving investments in 1983-84 by broad trade group

Trade	*Number*
Manufacturing	156
Service industries	112
Wholesale and retail distribution	79
Construction	23
Agriculture, horticulture and fishing	10
Others	17
TOTAL	397

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish an analysis in the *Official Report* of the average rate of tax relieved by the deductions under the business expansion scheme.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985]: The average rate of tax relief for investments under the business expansion scheme in 1983-84 was about 50 per

cent. Figures are not yet available for 1984-85. An analysis of marginal tax rates of BES investors in 1983-84 is as follows:

Marginal income tax rate per cent.*	*Percentages of investors*
30	10
40-55	35
60-70	30
75	25
TOTAL	100

* Including the investment income surcharge, where appropriate.

Turnover Taxes

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* annexes (1), (2), (3), (5), (6) and (7) to the letter sent by the Commissioners of Customs and Excise to the European Commission on 28 December 1977 concerning derogations under article 27(5) of the sixth Council directive on the harmonisation of turnover taxes.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985]: In view of their length, I have placed them in the Library and am sending copies to the hon. Member.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Vacancies

Mr. Neillst asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing for each principal careers office the number of job vacancies at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following table shows the number of unfilled vacancies at careers offices in Great Britain as at 3 May 1985.

Careers Office	*Vacancies unfilled*
SOUTH EAST	
Abingdon	47
Aldersbot	15
Alton	27
Amersham	41
Andover	10
Ashford	7
Aylesbury	63
Basildon	14
Basingstoke	35
Bedford	42
Bexhill	14
Bognor Regis	27
Boreham Wood	11
Bracknell	36
Braintree	28
Brentwood	20
Brighton	80
Camberley	15
Canterbury	12
Chelmsford	35
Chichester	34
Clacton on Sea	17
Colchester	9
Cosham	23
Crawley	75
Dartford	3
Deal	9
Dorking	18
Dover	6
Dunstable	43
Eastbourne	48
East Grinstead	17
Eastleigh	42
Epsom	17
Esher	58
Fareham	12
Farnborough	15
Farnham	26
Faversham	5
Folkestone	18
Gillingham	6
Godalming	20
Gosport	7
Gravesend	7
Grays	13
Guildford	33
Harlow	10
Hastings	39
Havant	20
Haywards Heath	41
Herne Bay	8
Hemel Hempstead	35
High Wycombe	81
Hitchin	15
Horsham	33
Leatherhead	26
Letchworth	13
Lewes	15
Littlehampton	5
Loughton	13
Luton	55
Lymington	43
Maidenhead	47
Maidstone	15
Malling	7
Margate	13
Medway	3
Milton Keynes	159
Newbury	87
Newhaven	3
Newport	9
Oxford	85
Portsmouth	41
Ramsgate	5
Rayleigh	32
Reading	161
Ryde	5
Redhill	36
St. Albans	48
Saffron Walden	31
Sandwich	11
Sheerness	7
Sevenoaks	39
Shoreham by Sea	18
Sittingbourne	7
Slough	106
Southampton	49
Southend on Sea	24
Staines	49
Stevenage	37
Sunbury	24
Tonbridge	11
Totton	7
Tunbridge Wells	28
Uckfield	26
Ware	43
Waterlooville	15
Watford	51
Welwyn Garden City	44
Weybridge	51
Whitstable	3
Winchester	15
Woking	14

Careers Office	Vacancies unfilled
Worthing	26
EAST ANGLIA	
Bury St. Edmunds	162
Cambridge	164
Dereham	9
Great Yarmouth	12
Huntingdon	20
Ipswich	42
Kings Lynn	9
Lowestoft	20
North Walsham	24
Norwich Central	46
Peterborough	11
Thetford	15
Wisbech	12
GREATER LONDON	
Acton	29
Balham	7
Barbican	20
Barking	6
Barkingside	10
Barnet	22
Barons Court	73
Bermondsey	55
Bexley	4
Brixton	27
Bromley	23
Camden Town	74
Carshalton	10
Catford	2
Central London	1,642
Chiswick	16
Clapham Junction	18
Croydon	100
Dagenham	10
Ealing	53
Eastham	6
Edmonton	21
Elephant and Castle	123
Eltham	4
Enfield	23
Feltham	24
Friern Barnet	24
Greenford	36
Hackney	27
Haringey	21
Harold Hill	8
Harrow	58
Hayes	5
Hendon	42
Hornchurch	3
Hounslow	28
Ilford	16
Islington	90
Kingston on Thames	35
Lewisham	12
Merton	25
Mitcham	9
Paddington	128
Peckham	37
Poplar	29
Putney	17
Rainham	4
Richmond	36
Romford	26
Ruislip	17
Shepherds Bush	36
Stepney	41
Stoke Newington	7
Stratford	5
Sutton	15
Uxbridge	52
Vauxhall	29
Waltham Forest	49
Wembley	23
Willesden	187
Woodford	7
Woolwich	10
SOUTH WEST	
Barnstaple	12
Bath Central	9
Bideford	8
Bodmin	4
Bournemouth	88
Bristol East and Central	15
Bristol North West	10
Bristol South	10
Camborne	3
Cheltenham	17
Chippenham	23
Cinderford	4
East Avon Area	6
East Dorset	46
East Somerset	13
Exeter	39
Falmouth	3
Gloucester	20
Helston	0
Liskeard	5
Mid-Somerset	3
Newquay	12
Newton Abbot	12
North Avon	11
North Dorset	27
North West Somerset	16
Paignton	16
Penwith Area	8
Plymouth	19
St. Austell	2
Salisbury	19
South Dorset	32
South East Somerset	15
Stroud	23
Swindon	42
Torquay	4
Trowbridge	13
Truro	4
West Avon	33
West Somerset	24
WEST MIDLANDS	
Aldridge	3
Aston	0
Atherstone	6
Bedworth	0
Birmingham	343
Bridgnorth	2
Bromsgrove	7
Brownhills	1
Burslem	6
Burton on Trent	12
Cannock	5
Chelmsley Wood	1
Coleshill	4
Coventry	89
Cradley Heath	8
Drayton	19
Droitwich	11
Dudley	38
Evesham	6
Handsworth	33
Hanley	6
Harborne	17
Hereford	9
Kidderminster	25

Careers Office	Vacancies unfilled
Kings Heath	48
Leamington	50
Leek	12
Leominster	4
Lichfield	10
Longton	7
Ludlow	11
Madeley	5
Malvern	8
Newcastle under Lyme	6
Nuneaton	7
Oakengates	0
Oldbury	2
Oswestry	9
Perry Barr	69
Pershore	6
Redditch	6
Ross on Wye	9
Rugby	10
Rugeley	6
Selly Oak	35
Shrewsbury	8
Smethwick	7
Solihull	9
Stafford	11
Stechford	32
Stratford on Avon	140
Sutton Coldfield	64
Tamworth	16
Telford	12
Tipton	1
Walsall	23
Wednesbury	3
West Bromwich	21
Willenhall	3
Wolverhampton	32
Wolverhampton Fringe	2
Worcester	60
Yardley	156
EAST MIDLANDS	
Alfreton	27
Arnold	12
Beeston	5
Boston	4
Brackley	5
Buxton	4
Carlton	10
Chesterfield	22
Coalville	14
Corby	19
Daventry	10
Derby	58
Eastwood	21
Gainsborough	3
Glossop	2
Grantham	8
Hinckley	39
Hucknall	14
Ilkeston	16
Kettering	6
Leicester Central	121
Lincoln	11
Long Eaton	5
Loughborough	28
Louth	4
Mansfield	4
Market Harborough	5
Matlock	4
Melton Mowbray	21
Newark	10
Northampton	48
Nottingham	39
Oakham	3
Retford	10
Rushcliffe	16
Rushden	6
Skegness	10
Sleaford	0
Spalding	7
Stamford	8
Staveley	9
Sutton in Ashfield	9
Swadlincote	10
Wellingborough	5
Wigston	8
Worksop	8
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE	
Barnsley	1
Batley	11
Beverley	8
Bransholme	3
Bradford	136
Bridlington	4
Castleford	6
Dewsbury	5
Doncaster	13
Goole	0
Grimsby	20
Halifax	41
Harrogate	41
Heddon	3
Hemsworth	2
Huddersfield	40
Hull	16
Hull (East Riding)	1
Leeds	82
Northallerton	40
Pontefract	2
Rotherham	32
Scarborough	21
Scunthorpe	9
Selby	7
Sheffield	44
Skipton	16
Wakefield	13
York	70
NORTH WEST	
Altrincham	7
Ashton under Lyne	25
Bebington	19
Birkenhead	11
Blackburn	19
Blackpool	18
Bolton	37
Bootle	0
Burnley	15
Bury	22
Chester	15
Chorley	10
Colne	4
Congleton	15
Crewe	1
Crosby	0
Darwen	2
Deeside	6
Eccles	2
Ellesmere Port	4
Fylde	8
Halewood	0
Halton (Runcorn)	2
Halton (Widnes)	3
Heywood	2
Huyton	1
Hyde	20
Hyndburn	10
Knowsley College	0

Careers Office	Vacancies unfilled
Kirkby	0
Lancaster	25
Leigh	2
Leyland	0
Liverpool	9
Longsight	1
Macclesfield	28
Macclesfield (Wilmslow)	5
Manchester	10
Middleton	2
Morecambe	1
Moss Side	6
Newton Le Willows	0
North Manchester	14
Oldham	15
Ormskirk	5
Openshawe	6
Pendle	3
Prescot	2
Preston	27
Ribble Valley	5
Rochdale	13
Rossendale	5
St. Helens	9
Salford	9
South Port	4
South Ribble	5
Stockport	28
Stretford	12
Swinton	2
Northwich	8
Wallasey	9
Warrington	3
Skelmersdale	1
Winsford	2
Wigan	3
Withington	18
Wyre	9
Wythenshawe	2
NORTH	
Alnwick	1
Ashington	11
Barrow	19
Berwick	1
Billingham	1
Bishop Auckland	2
Blaydon	2
Blyth	28
Carlisle	14
Chester le Street	4
Consett	2
Crook	6
Darlington	10
Durham	1
Easington	0
Eston	0
Gateshead	5
Guisborough	1
Hartlepool	2
Hebburn	5
Hexham	17
Houghton Le Spring	6
Kendal	27
Middlesborough	2
Newcastle	28
Newton Aycliffe	2
North Shields	3
Penrith	2
Redcar	0
South Shields	17
Spenny Moor	17
Stanley	9
Stockton on Tees	6
Sunderland	29
Ulverston	10
Wallsend	4
West Moor	2
Washington	19
Whitehaven	7
Whitley Bay	3
Workington	8
WALES	
Aberdare	1
Abertillery	2
Aberystwyth	4
Acrefair	1
Ammanford	1
Bangor	0
Barry	5
Blackwood	9
Brecon	10
Bridgend	4
Caernarvon	0
Caerphilly	2
Cardiff	72
Carmarthen	2
Colwyn Bay	4
Conwy	2
Cross Keys	3
Dolgellau	4
Flint	1
Gorseinon	2
Haverfordwest	2
Holyhead	0
Holywell	2
Llandrwdod Wells	4
Llanelli	10
Merthyr Tydfil	1
Mold	2
Morriston	0
Neath	0
Newport	6
Newton	9
Pembroke	0
Pontypool	7
Pontypridd	0
Port Talbot	0
Pwllheli	1
Rhyl	9
Shotton	15
Swansea District	3
Tonypandy	1
Usk	4
Wrexham	2
SCOTLAND	
Aberdeen	116
Alness	0
Alloa	2
Annan	0
Arbroath	14
Ardrossan	5
Ayr	2
Banff	0
Barrhead	0
Bathgate	0
Bellshill	1
Buckie	7
Cambuslang	0
Cambeltown	2
Castle Douglas	0
Clermiston	0
Clydebank	2
Coatbridge	9
Cowdenbeath	4
Cumbernauld	3
Cumnock	0

Careers Office	Vacancies unfilled
Cupar	2
Dalkeith	4
Dingwall	0
Dumbarton	0
Dumfries	1
Dundee	2
Dunfermline	5
Dunoon	1
Dunns	0
East Kilbride	1
Eastwood	3
Edinburgh	42
Elgin	3
Falkirk	9
Fortwilliam	0
Fraserburgh	1
Galashiels	2
Glasgow City	0
Glasgow Southside	0
Glenrothes	4
Govan	0
Grangemouth	0
Greenock	2
Haddington	0
Hamilton	3
Hawick	8
Inverness	11
Irvine	3
Johnstone	0
Keith	0
Kilmarnock	4
Kirkcaldy	1
Kirkintilloch	1
Kirkwall	2
Lanark	1
Larkhall	0
Lerwick	24
Leven	8
Livingston	2
Motherwell	1
Musselburgh	0
Oban	1
Paisley Central	0
Parkhead	3
Partick	2
Penicuick	1
Perth	7
Peterhead	4
Port Glasgow	3
Portree	6
Renfrew	0
Sighthill	0
Springburn	0
Stirling	8
Stornoway	1
Stranraer	0
Thurso	3
Turiff	1
Wick	2
Wishaw	1

Unemployment Statistics

Mr. Gordon Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the percentage increase in unemployment over the past 10 years in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the European Economic Community countries as a whole and *(c)* the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries as a whole.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is available in the Library.

Percentage increase in unemployment 1974 to 1984

	Per cent.
United Kingdom	456
European Community	310
OECD	178

Notes: OECD excludes Iceland for which information is not available. Based on annual averages for the two years.
Sources: Statistical Office of the European Communities; OECD "Main Economic Indicators".

Job Creation and Training

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for employment if he will list each of the Government-aided schemes aimed at reducing unemployment and the estimated cost of each for the financial year 1984-85; how much will be spent by way of the Manpower Services Commission for job creation, training schemes, the young worker schemes and other special measures designed to help young people; and what is the total amount of public money to be made available to reduce unemployment and create training opportunities.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The table shows expected expenditure (excluding administration costs) on each of the schemes funded by my Department or the Manpower Services Commission designed to promote and preserve employment opportunities or encourage training, including schemes for young people.

	1984-85 Provisional outturn	*1985-86 Estimates*
DE—Run Schemes		
Job Release Scheme (full-time)	280·1	195·0
Job Release Scheme (part-time)	0·2	6·6
Job Splitting Scheme	0·2	6·6
Temporary Short Time Working Compensation Scheme*	6·1	—
Training Loans Scheme† (proposed pilot project)	—	5·0
Careers Service Strengthening Scheme	11·6	12·3
Young Workers Scheme‡	41·3	32·0
DE—Schemes and Programmes Administered by MSC		
Community Programme‖	524·2	714·0
Community Industry	23·9	25·2
MSC—Run Schemes and Programmes		
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	76·8	111·1
Voluntary Projects Programme	9·3	12·1
Adult and Occupational Training	256·8	261·7
Work-related non-Advanced Further Education	—	65·0
Youth Training Scheme¶	785·1	781·1
Technical and Vocational Education Initiative	26·2	38·4
Total	2,041·8	2,266·1

* Closed for applications 31 March 1984.
† Provisional figures; pilot unlikely to start before early 1986.
‡ Closes for applications 31 March 1986.
‖ Includes small residual expenditure on former community enterprise programme (closed 2 October 1982) and increases announced in the Budget.
¶ Includes small residual expenditure on earlier schemes including youth opportunities programme (closed 31 March 1983).

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Employment, whether any changes will be made to the cash limits for his Department's Votes.

Mr. Tom King: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for Class IV, Vote 12 will be increased by £140,000,000 from £725,950,000 to £865,950,000. This is to provide for the expansion of the community programme from 130,000 to 230,000places by June 1986, as announced in the Chancellor's Budget statement on 19 March. The increase will be an addition to the public expenditure planning total.

A supplementary Estimate will also be presented for approval to increase the cash limit for Class Iv, Vote 14 by £573,000 from £13,741,000 to £14,314,000. This is to cover the costs of the work research unit, which was transferred to ACAS on 1 May 1985. Subject to parliamentary approval of a revised Estimate there will be a corresponding reduction of £573,000 from £249,260,000 to £248,687,000 in the cash limit for Class IV, Vote 16.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether local results are available from the Manpower Services Commission's survey of leavers from the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Manpower Services Commission conducts a regular survey of young people who have left the youth training scheme. Questionnaires are sent to a 15 per cent. sample of leavers in each month some three months after they leave the scheme.

The survey provides national results each month and regional results each quarter. Local results relate to the areas covered by each of the commission's training division's 55 area offices. This is the smallest geographical area for which the survey can provide results.

The first area results cover leavers between July-September 1984. I have arranged for them to be placed in the library. The next set of area results will cover the period October 1984 to March 1985. This is because a 15 per cent. sample of leavers for the next three-month period (October — December 1984) is not large enough to provide reliable area results.

Skillcentres

Dr. Blackburn asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether decisions have been reached on the skillcentre closures proposed in the Skillcentre Training Agency's business plan set out in MSC 84/66; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: On 21 February I informed the House in an oral statement that I had asked the Manpower Services Commission to implement the agency's proposals as set out in its business plan. I asked the chairman to make quite sure in doing so that when any closures were involved they should not take place until satisfactory alternative provisions had been identified. I also asked for the fullest consultation to take place with the staff and trade unions, with particular regard to negotiating new working practices designed to help the overall efficiency of the network and avoiding compulsory redundancies wherever possible.

I made it clear that the proposals for the reorganisation of the skillcentres made sense as a necessary step in improving the cost-effectiveness of training programmes, thus enabling substantial expansion in training opportunities, for unemployed as well as employed people, throughout the country.

The chairman of the Manpower Services Commission wrote today to me and to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales to say that he has completed his examination of alternative provision in areas where skillcentre closures were proposed taking account of representations made by hon. Members, local authorities and others. He is satisfied that satisfactory alternative provision exists in all areas. He has also fully re-appraised the business prospects of each centre, including any local offers of support, new business and changes in costs. As a result he has decided, in consultation with my right hon. Friends and myself, to authorise the chief executive of the skillcentre training agency to implement the business plan except for Twickenham skillcentre and the Southampton skillcentre annex where a financial case exists for their retention.

ENVIRONMENT

Asbestos (Faslane Base)

40. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the precautions taken by his Department to ensure the safe removal of asbestos adjacent to the Faslane base.

Sir George Young: Yes.

Local Government Reform

Mrs. Roe asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost of answering questions to him relating to the abolition of the Greater London council in the current Session.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: This information is not available. But in my view, the high cost of answering some questions was scarcely warranted by the usefulness of the information sought.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to make any changes in the cash limit for the rate support grant Vote.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised Estimate, the cash limit for Class XVIII, Vote 1 will be reduced by £400,000,000 from £9,172,000,000 to £8,772,000,000. Although I have yet to take formal decisions on the implementation of the abatement of block grant for 1985-86, this reduction flows from the proposals in the "Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1985-86" (approved by the House on 16 January 1985) and takes account of budgeted expenditure figures received from local authorities. It also reflects a recalculation of grant entitlements for 1982-83 in the light of the latest information about outturn expenditure in respect of that year. The proposed altered grant entitlements for 1985-86 and 1982-83 will be subject to the approval by the House of the relevant rate support grant supplementary reports. I hope to lay these reports before the House before the summer adjournment.

Land Registers

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he is making to enable the public to consult the computerised version of the land registers.

Mr. Macfarlane: I recently opened a new computerised service to make it easier to search the land registers. The service is available for a trial period at the headquarters of my Department, where the public will be able to search the registers for districts in Greater London and my Department's south-western, eastern, north-western and northern regions. The registers for the remaining districts will be made available in due course.

A charge will be made for use of the computerised registers, but the original volumes will continue to be available as hitherto, without charge.

Computer Installations

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all computer installations (hardware and peripherals) in his Department, indicating for each its location, make, type, configuration, operating system, systems soft-ware, age and planned life.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985]: The information has been placed in the Library.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Pilot Schemes

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is yet in a position to announce the terms of reference and membership of the National Steering Committee to oversee the records of achievement pilot schemes.

Sir Keith Joseph: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have now set up this committee.

The terms of reference are:

1. To steer, monitor and evaluate the pilot schemes for records of achievement receiving support under the Education Support Grants scheme, with particular reference to the objectives and issues for consideration identified in the Government's July 1984 policy statement.
2. To oversee the work of the professional evaluating team which the Department of Education and Science is to fund from its research budget.
3. To report to the Secretaries of State in the autumn of 1988 on the experience gained and on the implications for introducing records of achievement for all pupils in secondary education in England and Wales, and to prepare draft national guidelines for such records and recording systems.

The members of the committee will be:

Mr. P. A. Clarke, Principal, Harrogate College of Further Education.
Mrs. M. W. Corke, Chairman, The West Midlands Examinations Board.
Mr. J. D. Dutton, Headmaster, Richmond School, North Yorkshire.
Mr. B. W. Fletcher, Deputy Head, St. Thomas' High School, Devon.
Mr. J. L. Glasscock, Divisional Managing Director, Civil Division, British Aerospace plc.
Mr. D. B. Moy, Manager, Senior Management Development, J. Sainsbury plc.
Mr. M. Payn, Chief Adviser, Cumbria County Council.
Mr. J. D. Perry, TVEI Evaluator, School of Education, Leicester University.
Mr. A. Pickavance, Chief Education Officer, Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council.
Miss M. Reid, Deputy Director, National Foundation for Educational Research.
Mrs. M. Rogers, Deputy Head, The Dene School, Cleveland.
Professor M. Shipman, Roehampton Institute of Higher Education.
Mr. B. H. Whitfield, Managing Director, Hautin Limited.
Mr. R. J. Whittaker, Deputy Secretary, Joint Matriculation Board.

Mr. A. J. C. Edwards and Mr. S. W. Cosser of the Department of Education and Science will be chairman and secretary respectively. Assessors will be provided by the Welsh Office, Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the Secondary Examinations Council.

The committee will be supported by a team of evaluators from the Open University and Bristol University. The joint directors of the team will be Professor Desmond Nuttall of the Open University and Dr. Patricia Broadfoot of Bristol University.

Student Grants

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what student grant levels will be for the academic year 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: Local authorities were informed on 31 May that the main rates of grant will be increased by 3 per cent. in the academic year 1985-86. For undergraduates the main rates will be:

	£
London	2,165
Elsewhere	1,830
Home	1,480

The parental contribution scale will be adjusted upwards in line with earnings, the contributions from those in the middle and upper reaches of the scale will be increased. The minimum maintenance award will be abolished, but parents will not be expected to contribute towards the cost of tuition fees.

For post graduate students in receipt of studentships the main rates will be:

	£
London	3,265
Elsewhere	2,665
Home	1,960

Legionnaire's Disease

Mr. Peter Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what fundamental research into the origins, spread and treatment of legionnaire's disease has been conducted by the Medical Research Council in the last five years; and what research is planned for future years.

Sir Keith Joseph: I understand that since the beginning of 1980 the Medical Research Council has funded four projects on Legionnaire's disease. The total cost of these projects is approximately £136,000. The details of the work are as follows:

Pathogenesis, pathology and disease processes in experimental infection with legionella pneumophila
Disease processes and mechanisms by immunity in experimental legionella pneumophila infection
The use of gas liquid chromatography in the identification of

legionella pneumophila
Monoclonal antibodies to legionella pneumophila and related organisms.

The MRC is also funding other research on respiratory infections which could be relevant to our understanding of Legionnaire's disease. The council is always willing to consider soundly based research proposals for support through its research grant scheme in competition with other applications.

Lower Attaining Pupils Programme

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to evaluate and disseminate the lesson arising from the lower attaining pupils programme; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The lower attaining pupils programme, which currently embraces 12 pilot projects in 13 LEAs, began in September 1983. It is therefore in its second academic year. I have invited four more authorities to join the programme in 1985. Some 100 secondary schools are presently involved. The programme is designed principally to improve the educational attainments of pupils aged 14 to 16 for whom present public examinations at 16-plus are not appropriate and who are not benefiting fully from school; and to develop new forms of curricular provision and teaching approaches. Most of the LEAs introduced new approaches in the classroom in September 1983, but four authorities used the first year for planning and inservice training. It is therefore premature to draw substantive conclusions on the outcome of the programme. The Department has commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to evaluate the programme as a whole, and each individual project will be evaluated by the authorities concerned. Her Majesty's Inspectorate is also assessing the quality of the work in the schools in the normal ways. The central and local evaluators will increasingly be in a position to draw conclusions from the work. The Department will therefore be sponsoring in the early part of the next academic year, and jointly with the NFER, a conference of participants to make an assessment of progress and to exchange experience. The programme is an important element of the policies set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) for raising standards of achievement for pupils of all abilities. I am encouraged by the response of schools and authorities in this demanding and complex area. I also welcome the dissemination of ideas and approaches that has already taken place as a result of initiatives by individual authorities. I hope that the pilot projects will indicate new approaches to giving curricular provision a practical and relevant slant, not only for the target group in question, but across a wider ability range.

Engineering and Technology Programme

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he plans to include any public sector institutions of higher education in the engineering and technology programme announced on 19 March.

Sir Keith Joseph: In the light of further advice from representatives of industry, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have invited the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education, in association with the Wales Advisory Body, to offer advice on institutions of particular strength in this area to which resources under the second phase of this programme might be allocated. As in the first phase of the programme, industrial commitment to institutions will be an important criteria for inclusion in the programme.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Primates (Caging)

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to support research and development into caging for primates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I am afraid that at present I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member on 7 May, at column 331.

Cumbria (Alleged Bribery and Corruption)

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cumbria on the progress of inquiries into allegations of attempted bribery and corruption concerning land for private development in the Cartmel and Furness local plan prepared by the planning department of the South Lakeland district council.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Cumbria that following an allegation of corruption made to his officers on 5 January an investigation was undertaken and a report submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who has recommended that no further action be taken in the case.

PRIME MINISTER

Gainsborough

Q9. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Gainsborough.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Graduates

Q13. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Prime Minister what steps the Government are taking to increase the numbers of graduates in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced on 19 March, at column 482, a decision to allocate £43 million over the academic years 1985-86 and 1987-88 for the provision of extra places to increase the number of graduates and postgraduates in engineering and technology. "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s" (Cmnd. 9524) was published on 21 May. It sets out the Government's thinking on future access to higher education and our intention to maintain a distinct emphasis on technological and directly vocational courses at all levels.

Lambeth

Q103. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to the Lambeth inner city partnership area.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Speller asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with co-ordination between the Departments of Energy and the Environment concerning energy efficiency in buildings; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 19 April at columns 293-94.

European Cup Final (Relief Fund)

Mr. Chope asked the Prime Minister how the Government's contribution to the relief fund, which was offered in her letter to Signor Craxi following the disaster at the European Cup Final, will be financed.

The Prime Minister: A Supplementary Estimate on the Vote for International Subscriptions, Special Payments etc. (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) (Class II, Vote 2) will be presented in due course to cover the urgent expenditure on this new service. Pending parliamentary approval of this Supplementary Estimate, the Government's contribution will be financed by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund. This additional expenditure will be charged to the Reserve and therefore does not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Engagements

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 4 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Additives

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is currently undertaking into the dietary effect of food additives.

Mrs. Fenner: Research into the potential effects of additives on humans is presently funded by this Ministry at various centres in the United Kingdom. The objectives of this research are to determine whether or not there are validated adverse reactions to food additives both in the general population and in a group of asthmatic children; to investigate the relationship between the clinical effects and food additives; and to elucidate the physiological changes, if any, which have occurred.

Mr. Fry asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what foods are prohibited from having E320 and E321 additives in them;

(2) if he will list those foods for family consumption which allow additives E320 and E321.

Mrs. Fenner: The use of additives E320 (Butylated hydroxyyanisole) and E321 (Butylated hydroxtoluene) is strictly controlled by the Antioxidants in Food Regulations 1978 (SI 1978 No. 105) as amended. Schedule 3 of the regulations defines the permitted uses and specified levels of E320 and E321 in a number of food ingredients including dairy products for manufacturing, and anhydrous edible oils and fats. Their use in food intended for babies or young children is specifically prohibited with the exception of certain vitamin A preparations.

Mr. Dykes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, with a view to carrying out the recommendation contained in paragraph 33 of the report by the Food Additives and Contaminents Committee on the "Review of Sweeteners in Food", published in 1982 (FAC/REP/34), he will now undertake a survey of the number of food and drink products currently being, or shortly to be, marketed in the United Kingdom which contain the intense sweetener Aspartame.

Mrs. Fenner: No. As I have explained to my hon. Friend before, most recently on 18 March 1985, at column *403*, information on the intake of all permitted sweeteners will be collected and reviewed within the next four years. The Food Additives and Contaminants committee endorsed the recommendation of the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment that the collection of this information should be carried out when sufficient time has been allowed for the market to stabilise. The market is still developing and it would be inappropriate to start a review yet.

EC (Warehouses)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the European Economic Community warehouses and their locations in Wales; and what amount of what product is being stored there.

Mr. Jopling: Intervention stocks in Wales on 30 April, the latest date for which figures are available, were as follows:

	Tonnes
Beef	
Rhyl	186
Cardiff	790
Skimmed Milk Powder	
St. Clears	960
Llandysul	979
Bedwas	2,259
Butter	
Cardiff	8,563
Swansea	2,178
Newport	675
Rhyl	948
Milford Haven	480
Whitland	280

Beer (Imported Malt)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of British brewed beer is brewed from imported malt.

Mr. MacGregor: No information is available on the amount of imported malt used in United Kingdom brewing. Malt imports in recent years have accounted for around 2 to 4 per cent. of malt supplies on the United Kingdom market.

French Malt

Mr. Sheerman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking in the European Community about French subsidies to malt supplied to British brewers.

Mr. MacGregor: The EC Commission is responsible for monitoring all aids given by member states with a view to ensuring they are compatible with Community rules. We are constantly on the alert for national aids to agriculture that appear to breach the treaty. I am fully prepared to refer substantiated cases to the Commission.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning French malt producers supplying British brewers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: None. We have a two-way trade in malt with France and our exports have exceeded our imports in each of the past three years.

WALES

Skimmed Milk (Intervention Stocks)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 8 March 1985, *Official Report*, columns *620-1*, concerning the levels of skimmed milk held in an intervention store in Bedwas, why the information requested was denied on grounds of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I regret that the withholding of the information requested on 8 March 1985 was mistaken. The amount of skimmed milk stored at Bedwas on the given dates as requested is as follows:

	Tonnes
31 May 1985	2,210
28 February 1985	5,530
30 November 1984	9,979
31 May 1984	9,976

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Confectionery

Mr. Sumberg asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what action he is proposing to take to protect British export trade against the possible extension of higher United States duties or quotas on various European Community products including United Kingdom confectionery;

(2) if he will make a statement on the implications for the United Kingdom of the investigation being carried out by the United States International Trade Commission into the desirability of extending United States quotas on sweetened cocoa powder to other chocolate and confectionery products.

Mr. Channon: In January of this year the United States extended the scope of existing import restrictions on certain sugars and sugar-containing products. This was an interim measure, pending the outcome of an investigation by the US International Trade Commission of imports of products containing sugar. It provoked a sharp response from the United States' international trading partners, including the European Commission, within whose competence such matters lie. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry took the opportunity of his visit to Washington last month to repeat these concerns. Subsequently, on 17 May, the US Government decided to lift some of the restrictions imposed in January with effect from 19 May.

Those of the new restrictions which remain in force after 19 May are of limited concern to United Kingdom exporters, though the Government consider them to be without justification. But among other products under consideration by the ITC are a number in which we have a substantial export trade to the United States, in particular sugar confectionery, chocolate confectionery and preserves and marmalades. This trade could be seriously affected by the imposition of quota restrictions or increases in duties. We, and our European Community partners, will be urging the US Government not to give in to domestic protectionist pressures but to adhere to the commitment given at last month's Bonn economic summit on the avoidance of protectionism.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to what factors, and in what proportions, he attributes the £400 million loss recorded by the Export Credits Guarantee Department; and if there is any indication that the fraud of which the Export Credits Guarantee Department, with other insurers, has been the victim and which is currently being investigated by the fraud squad, played any significant part.

Mr. Channon: ECGD's cash deficit of £392·5 million at 31 March 1985 reflects the Department's recent record claims payments, which have far outstripped premium and interest income. About 20 per cent. of these claims have arisen from private buyer default; the balance is principally due to shortages of foreign exchange in the major debtor countries. It is expected that these latter claims will be recovered in accordance with the terms of international debt rescheduling agreements. In the interim, ECGD will pay interest at commercial rates on its borrowings from the Consolidated Fund. I have seen no evidence which suggests that fraud has been a significant contributory factor.

Local Enterprise Agencies

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* all local enterprise agencies currently operating, giving their full address and details of jobs placed.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Small Firms Centres

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all small firms centres giving the number of inquiries handled in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The numbers of inquiries handled by each of the Department's small firms centres are as follows:

Small Firms Centre	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Region			
Birmingham (West Midlands)	24,527	29,824	26,587
Bristol (South West)	24,549	28,757	24,746
Cambridge (Eastern)	22,792	25,699	23,228
Leeds (Yorkshire and Humberside)	25,901	27,172	25,050
London (South East)	41,741	58,362	42,300
Manchester/ Liverpool (North West)	35,377	39,345	29,998
Newcastle (North West)	19,860	21,405	17,210
Nottingham (East Midlands)	23,596	29,049	27,147
Reading* (Southern)	281	28,658	25,825

* Reading small firms centre opened in March 1983

The small firms centres have continued to meet successfully the demands placed upon them by small businesses. The generally higher level of inquiries in 1983-84 is believed to have resulted mainly from the major publicity campaign for the small firms service in early 1983 and the 1983 Budget, which included a number of measures to help small firms. Computerisation within the small firms centres, completed early this year, and the repackaging of the Department's "Support for Business" schemes have improved the speed and quality of the service the small firms centres can offer.

Local Enterprise Week

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will report on the recent Local Enterprise Week giving details of each undertaking known to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Ian MacGregor

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the performance fee for Mr. MacGregor's period at British Steel has yet been determined; what criteria are being used; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 16 November 1984, at column 370, on this subject. The decision of the review committee will be made known after BSC's accounts for the year to end-March 1985 are available. Copies of the committee's criteria were placed in the Library of the House on 15 April 1981.

British Telecom (Shares)

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether City firms involved in the sale of British Telecom shares, as underwriters and in other capacities, had any privileged access to the shares; and whether the same limitations as applied to the general public, in terms of the maximum number of shares allotted to each purchaser, also applied to such firms and their employees.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Beer

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce regulations to prevent beer made in Britain from malt imported at subsidised prices from France being marketed with labels describing it as British beer.

Mr. Fletcher: I see no case for a measure of this kind.

Burdens on Business Report

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to act on the proposals in the burdens on business report relating to accounting and audit requirements for small companies.

Mr. Fletcher: My Department published a consultative document today inviting comments on those proposals and other options, including the exemption of all small companies from the statutory audit requirement. Comments are requested by 30 September. The Government will consider changes in present requirements in the light of the consultation. Copies of the consultative document have been placed in the Library.

Rolls-Royce (Privatisation)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to appoint external advisers in connection with the privatisation of Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Pattie: It remains the Government's intention to see Rolls-Royce returned to the private sector during the course of the present Parliament. I welcome the company's results for 1984, which show a return to profit and, although a longer period of profitability will be required before the company can be returned to the private sector, I intend to appoint a merchant bank shortly to give preliminary advice to the Department in connection with the company's privatisation.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia (Port Charges)

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding the levying of port charges on emergency food packages by the Ethiopian Government.

Mr. Raison: The Ethiopian Maritime and Transit Services Corporation levies port charges on all aid goods. If these are sent to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission they attract a concessionary agency fee of $3·81 per metric tonne. If not, they attract the full commercial rate averaging $12·60 per metric tonne. We

support the efforts of the World Food Programme to negotiate a reduction in the agency fee for all relief consignments. Overall, Ethiopian port charges are generally in line with those at other African ports.

SCOTLAND

Fife Regional Council

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the differences in rate poundage between Fife regional council's actual budget and a budget conforming to guidelines; and what percentage reduction in the council's expenditure would be necessary to reduce the budget to conform with the guidelines.

Mr. Ancram: If Fife regional council had conformed to its guideline in 1985-86, its rate poundage would have been 50p instead of 54p. A 4·8 per cent. reduction in planned expenditure would enable the council to meet its guideline.

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the position of Fife in a list of regional councils in order of rate poundage charged in 1975 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Ancram: In 1975-76, Fife regional council had the seventh highest rate poundage among regional councils, in 1985-86 the highest.

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take selective action to return to ratepayers the product of expenditure in excess of guidelines of Fife regional council.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend has to have close regard to the precise terms of the statute before initiating action against a local authority on the grounds that it is planning excessive and unreasonable expenditure. Although Fife's planned percentage excess over guideline is the highest of any regional council and will attract a severe RSG penalty, my right hon. Friend does not consider that the authority is planning excessive and unreasonable expenditure which would justify selective action in terms of section 5 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1966.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of travel-to-work areas showing the latest percentage unemployment in each; and if he will attach corresponding figures for October 1982, claimant based, and October 1982, registration based.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's letter of 22 October 1984. The information is available in the Library. It should be noted that the areas to which the latest available rates relate do not correspond with those for October 1982 because of the redefinition of the travel-to-work areas in August 1984.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the percentage increase in unemployment in Scotland over the past 10 years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The percentage increase in unemployment in Scotland, based on annual averages between 1974 and 1984, is estimated to have been 330 per cent.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people under the age of 21 years in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Glasgow, *(c)* Edinburgh, *(d)* Aberdeen and *(e)* Dundee have never had a job since leaving school.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is not available in the precise form requested. However, unemployment figures for school leavers, who are defined as people who have not entered employment since leaving full-time education, are available in the Library for the areas requested by the age categories of under 18, aged 18, aged 19 and over.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many school leavers were unemployed in Scotland in January 1984 and January 1985.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's letter of 22 October 1984. The information requested is available in the Library.

Forestry

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he intends to alter the balance of public subsidy away from the establishment of upland plantations towards the management of existing farm woods.

Mr. John MacKay: No. The Government will continue to give support to both the establishment of upland plantations and the management of existing farm woods.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

NATO (Greece and Turkey)

41. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement upon the effect upon the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's south eastern flank of relations between Greece and Turkey.

Mr. Renton: We very much regret any differences which arise between our two allies over the issue and hope they can soon be resolved in order to minimise any disruptive effect on NATO business.

Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act 1984

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice his Department is giving to British citizens affected by the Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act 1984.

Mr. Rifkind: They are being advised that the Zimbabwean legislation abolishes dual citizenship with effect from 1 December 1985. Similar restrictions on the possession of another nationality are contained in the laws of many countries, including a number in the Commonwealth. It is for each individual who holds both British and Zimbabwean citizenship to decide what course to adopt.

I understand that, under Zimbabwean law and regulations dual citizens who wish to opt for mono-Zimbabwean citizenship must sign a declaration to that effect in the Zimbabwean Registrar General's Department. If they have a British passport, they are obliged to submit it to the Zimbabwean authorities, who will subsequently return it to the British high commission. Dual British-Zimbabwean citizens who do not take this action will, in Zimbabwean law, become mono-British citizens on 1 December 1985.

Under the British Nationality Act 1981, British citizenship can be lost only by those who voluntarily renounce it and whose declaration of renunciation is registered at the Home Office in accordance with the British Nationality Act 1981. A person who renounces British citizenship in order to retain or acquire some other citizenship or nationality is entitled to re-acquire it by registration, but this provision may be taken advantage of only once. International practice precludes British consular protection being afforded to dual British/Zimbabwean citizens in Zimbabwe and this will of course continue to be the case for those who opt for Zimbabwean citizenship. Persons who renounce their British citizenship will be ineligible for British consular protection in any country.

United Kingdom—USSR Hot Line

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what technology is used in the hot line between Britain and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Luce: The technology used enables the exchange of printed messages in the language of the originator over cable or radio channels which are directly and continuously available between the two capitals.

Mr. Boyes: asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to paragraph 116 of the defence Estimates, whether the hot line between Britain and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics *(a)* requires modernisation, *(b)* is proof against the electro-magnetic pulse generated by a number of kiloton range nuclear explosions in central and northern Europe and *(c)* is regularly tested.

Mr. Luce: *(a)* In its present form the hot line is adequate for the exchange of printed messages for which purpose it was established. The scope for use of other systems is constantly under review; *(b)* No; *(c)* Yes.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Student Awards

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what aspects of student travel awards he is prepared to review; and what financial or adminstrative limitations there will be on such a review;

(2) what consideration he has given to the recent assessment of the impact of changes in student travel award scheme by the Association of Education and Library Boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: My Department felt unable to accept the validity of the figures presented to me by the Association of Education and Library Boards. For this reason—and with the full consent of the association—officers of the Department in collaboration with the boards are currently engaged in an exercise which will, in effect, extend earlier sample surveys to a much fuller review of available data.

I have already given an assurance that if the evidence arising from the survey shows clearly that, as a direct consequence of the introduction of the flat rate travel grants, Northern Ireland students are generally in a worse position than their counterparts in England and Wales, I shall be prepared to re-examine the situation with a view to seeing what, if anything, might reasonably be done to alleviate their position.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funds his Department has allocated for discretionary student awards, higher value and lower value, for use by each of the education and library boards and by his Department for the next academic year.

Mr. Scott: Funds are allocated to education and library boards on a financial year basis. The approved financial schemes for the current financial year allow for the following provision for discretionary awards:

	£000's
Belfast	609
North-Eastern	851
South-Eastern	612
Southern	660
Western	723

The distribution of these funds between higher value and lower value awards is a matter for the education and library boards and the actual distribution for the next academic year has yet to be determined.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining the number of discretionary awards allocated by each of the education and library boards and his Department for the current academic year indicating the numbers of higher value and lower value awards, the numbers of minimum and maximum awards, the numbers of living at home and living away from home awards, the numbers of applications for awards and the total amount allocated by each awarding agency.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Housing Benefits

The Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the review being carried out by officials of housing benefits in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Griffiths Committee

39. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the list of recommendations of the Griffiths committee which he has approved, those he is still considering and those he has rejected.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have accepted the main aims of the report of the National Health Service management inquiry team led by Mr. Roy Griffiths, and all the team's recommendations are currently being implemented. Within our Department we have established the Health Services Supervisory Board and NHS Management Board, as recommended by the team. Members of the NHS Management Board have been drawn from the private sector, the National Health Service and the civil service. Health authorities have also made considerable progress in putting themselves in a position to carry out the general management function. To date 13 regional and 166 district general managers have been appointed and work is under way to implement new management structures, develop management budgeting and strengthen accountability in line with the NHS management inquiry report.

Disabled People

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary State for Social Services to what extent the needs of the disabled have been taken into account in the social security reviews, especially in relation to single payments for those in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Newton: Benefits specifically for sick and disabled people were not included in the social security review, the outcome of which was published yesterday in a Green Paper, "Reform of Social Security", (Cmnds. 9517-9519). The Green Paper, however, makes it clear that the Government's objective in this field, as in others, is to move towards a more coherent system. Useful progress has already been made by such measures as the ending of the invalidity trap and the introduction of severe disablement allowance, and we have set in hand a major new survey to obtain up-to-date information about the extent and effects of disablement. The results of this survey will enable these benefits to be reviewed in their turn.

Meanwhile, the importance the Government attach to special needs of disabled people is reflected in the Green Paper proposals relating to other benefits. The structure of the proposed new income support scheme includes a special premium for long-term sick and disabled people, which will also be reflected in the new simpler housing benefit arrangements. A more generous disregard of earnings will also be applied in the new income support scheme.

Nursing Homes (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a reply to his letter of 11 April, on behalf of Mr. D. L. Jones and Mrs. B. M. K. Wild, regarding his Department's contributions towards charges for nursing homes, to the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten).

Mr. Whitney: I replied to my hon. Friend today.

Limited List Prescribing

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will extend the availablity of mucolytic and expectorant medications available under the limited lists of drugs available for respiratory diseases in areas with an unusually high incidence of such diseases, some industrially induced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We will shortly be setting up a committee to keep the selected list under review, to ensure that it continues to meet all clinical needs at the lowest possible cost to the National Health Service. One of the first tasks of this committee will be to reconsider the position of mucolytics and expectorants if they are asked to do so by the manufacturers.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many managers have now been appointed for district health authorities; and of these how many were nurses.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: To date, 166 of the 191 district health authorities have appointed general managers, three of whom are nurses. In addition, one of the 13 regional general managers appointed so far is a nurse. We remain convinced of the vital need to attract and appoint nurses of the required management ability to posts in general management. We are pressing authorities to continue to pay particular attention to this as they move towards filling general manager posts at unit level.

Newcastle Office (Dispute)

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total cost of the strike at the Newcastle social security centre of computer operators in 1984; if he will break down the cost into its component parts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Our latest estimate of the cost of the strike in 1984-85 is £145 million made up as follows:

	£ million
(a) Payments to the Post Office for operating the emergency payment procedures	110
(b) Extra staff and overtime in this Department and the Department of Employment	34
(c) Publicity, extra postage on payments etc.	5
(d) Offset by savings on salaries of the strikers and on postage of order books from Newcastle	4

National Insurance Appeals Tribunals

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consultations were held prior to the recent change in the composition of national insurance appeals tribunals; what was the purpose of the change; what its effect has been; what representations he has received on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The changes in the procedures for selecting members of social security appeal tribunals, made under section 16 of the Health and Social Security Act 1984, were designed to increase the range of representation on tribunal panels.

The Council on Tribunals was formally consulted and the Department was aware of the views of the Trades Union Congress and the Confederation of British Industry. Altogether some 100 representations were received from interested parties on this issue.

The president of the social security appeal tribunals has made known his wish to create broadly based panels of tribunal members containing not only representatives from both sides of industry but also from groups representing, for example, disabled people, ethnic minorities, women and pensioners who either live or work in the area. It is too early as yet to say what effect the changes have had on the composition of tribunal members since the term of appointment is for five years. I am advised that the president maintains regular contact with representative bodies on the selection of panel members and I am not aware of any difficulties encountered in the selection process.

Moorfields Eye Hospital (Glaucoma Patients)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of patients suffering from glaucoma treated as outpatients, and the number treated as inpatients, at Moorfields eye hospital in each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Moorfields eye Hospital special health authority, who may be able to give him the required information.

Doctors (Expenses)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list those matters in respect of which general practitioners receive indirect expenses; and if he will quantify the average value of each of the same to individual general practitioners;

(2) what instructions he has given to family practitioner committees in relation to the direct and indirect expenses of part-time general practitioners; and if he will make a statement;

(3) pursuant to his reply of 25 March, *Official Report*, column 97, and 4 April, *Official Report*, column 767, if he will list and describe in the fullest reasonable particularity the nature and value of the individual expenses incurred by general practitioners.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 May 1985, c. *214*]: The remuneration arrangements are designed to reimburse to general medical practitioners as a body that portion of the expenses they incur which is appropriate to the provision of general medical services. Some of these expenses are paid in whole or in part directly to those incurring them. These include:

Estimated average payment per general practitioner in England in 1984-85

	£
1. Rent and Rates	2,287
2. Ancilliary staff salaries (70 per cent.) and employers NI contributions	4,971
3. GP trainees' salaries and associated costs	1,146
4. The cost of employing locums during sickness, confinement or prolonged study leave	67
5. The cost of drugs and appliances dispensed by doctors	3,965
6. Costs under the doctors' retainer scheme	11

That part of the expenses listed which is not directly reimbursed and all other expenses incurred in providing general medical services are reimbursed indirectly through fees and allowances. These include expenses such as car running costs and other travelling expenses, heating, lighting, postage, medical and surgical supplies and equipment, telephone, stationery, non-structural repairs and maintenance, computers, furnishings, office machinery, salaries of medical assistants, payments to locums other than those employed in circumstances when the direct reimbursement of these costs is appropriate and payments for the use of deputising services.

The total amount of the expenses which are to be reimbursed indirectly is determined from information obtained in confidence from the Inland Revenue for a sample of general medical practitioners and is built into fees and allowances by the Review Body on Doctors and Dentists Remuneration. The review body concluded that on average £10,830 per doctor in Great Britain should be reimbursed indirectly in 1984-85. It is not possible to attribute this to the individual expenses of individual doctors. The average amount paid to doctors in England in 1984-85 through fees and allowances, together with the direct reimbursements listed above and the average improvement grant paid of £138, was £46,280.

The criteria governing the eligibility of general medical practitioners for the direct reimbursement of expenses and the reimbursement of fees and allowances (many of which include an element for expenses not otherwise reimbursed), and where appropriate the rate, are laid down in the "Statement of Fees and Allowances".

Dispensing Doctors (Discount Inquiry)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 16 April, *Official Report*, column 166, why his Department undertook a dispensing doctors' discount inquiry in 1983; what were its terms of reference; what were its conclusions; if he will place a copy in the Library; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps his Department is taking to ensure that dispensing doctors account for all discounts they receive as from 1 April from drugs' manufacturers and wholesalers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 May 1985, c. *218*]: In their twelfth report the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body invited the health Departments and the profession to consider whether there should be some adjustment to their recommendations to take account of the differential between the net incomes of dispensing and non-dispensing doctors. As a result the inquiry was conducted with terms of reference to establish if, and if so by how much, dispensing doctors were able to purchase their drugs below the value at which they were reimbursed by prescription pricing bodies.

The inquiry found that, on the basis of purchases for the months of April to June 1983, there were wide variations in the size of discount obtained, but that dispensing doctors as a group were able to obtain discount averaging about 5 per cent. General medical practitioners' practice accounts have always shown the actual cost of drugs purchased so that, as I explained in my reply to my hon. Friend on 14 March, at columns *243-44*, actual expenses due to the profession as a body are, and always have been, calculated after deduction of discount. The amount of expenses distributed to the profession as a whole is therefore correct whatever the average discount adjustment. To ensure that the reimbursement of drug costs to

individual doctors matches as nearly as possible costs actually incurred it may be necessary to repeat the discount inquiry from time to time.

This inquiry was jointly commissioned by the Health Departments and general medical services committee of the British Medical Association. The doctors concerned, who were disclosing details of their remuneration and business practices, were given an undertaking that the information they supplied would be treated in the strictest confidence and used only for the purposes of the inquiry. Their suppliers were given a similar undertaking. It would not therefore be appropriate to place a copy in the Library.

Legionnaire's Disease

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on Government-funded research into legionnaire's disease, giving details of each project funded since 1979, including the grant or budget, the number of researchers involved, the date of commencement of the project and the date of completion in the case of each project.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 May 1985, c. *255*]: Since 1979 research into Legionnaire's disease has been carried out in the laboratories of the Public Health Laboratory Services and in universities. Available information on Government-funded research is in the table.

	Project Title	*Research Institute*	*Funded by*	*Grant £*	*Date commenced*	*Date completed*
1.	Legionnaires disease: Pathogenesis, Pathology and disease processes in experimental infection with legionella pneumophilia	Department of Pathogenic Microbes, PHLS Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, Porton Down	MRC	36,067	1982	Continuing
2.	Legionnaires disease: disease processes and mechanisms of immunity in experimental legionella pneumophilia infection	As above	MRC	33,906	1983	Continuing
3.	The use of gas liquid chromatography in the identification of legionella pneumophilia	Department of Bacterial Metabolism, PHLS, Colindale Avenue, London	MRC	37,656	1980	1984
4.	Monoclonal antibodies to legionella pneumophilia and related organisms	Sir William Dunn School of Pathology, Oxford	MRC	27,987	1981	1984
5.	To obtain further information about the incidence of legionnaires disease in Scotland	University of Glasgow, Department of Infectious Diseases, Ruchill Hospital, Glasgow	SHHD	5,933	1979	1980
6.	Investigation into legionnaires disease and other infections among package tourists and other travellers (extension of No. 5)	As above	SHHD	5,746	1980	1982
7.	Study of legionella pneumophilia in water systems and air conditioning equipment	Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre	DHSS	98,859	1981	1984

Note: Since the number of researchers required for a project may vary during its progress it is not practicable to give detailed information.

DEFENCE

Crisis Management

3. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what improvements have been made to his Department's plans for crisis management since April 1982.

Mr. Stanley: Crisis management arrangements are regularly reviewed and exercised. It would be neither practicable nor, on security grounds, possible to list the detailed changes which have been made to crisis management plans since April 1982. However, I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 204 to 206 of "The Falklands Campaign: The lessons" (Cmnd. 8758).

Royal Small Arms Factory, Enfield

12. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future likely work load of the Royal small arms factory, Enfield.

Mr. Butler: The Royal small arms factory at Enfield is now preparing for production of the first batch of the new infantry small arms weapon system, SA 80. This order is for 175,000 weapons and will provide the factory with a good base load for the next four years. There are a number of other Ministry of Defence orders in prospect. However, as with the other divisions of Royal Ordnance plc, the future work load of Enfield will depend on its ability to win orders from MOD and elsewhere in a competitive and commercial environment.

Falkland Islands

15. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his visit to the Falkland Islands between 11 and 14 May.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) on 24 May at column *599*.

Sea Wolf Missile Launchers

16. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many lightweight Sea Wolf missile launchers it is intended that there should be in the type 23 procurement programme.

Mr. Lee: None. As my right hon. Friend told the House on 12 April 1984, at columns 527-39, our intention is to fit the vertical launch version of Sea Wolf to the type 23 frigate. This weapon is currently undergoing development.

Aish and Dowty Rotol Companies (Defence Procurement)

18. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made in his negotiations related to defence procurement with Aish and Company and Dowty Rotol and Company.

Mr. Lee: We have reached agreement with Aish and Co. concerning a number of contracts and sub-contracts on which post costing investigations have been completed.

Ministry of Defence police investigations concerning Dowty Rotol Ltd. have just been completed and their report is being considered within the Department.

General Belgrano

19. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied that he had seen all Government papers relating to the sinking of the General Belgrano prior to his speech in the House on that subject on 18 February.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend has no reason to suppose that he was not fully briefed on the main facts relating to the sinking of the General Belgrano before he made his speech on 18 February. I understand that there are a great number of such documents and it would not have been practical for my right hon. Friend to have read every single one himself.

Central Ordnance Depots

20. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the work of the central ordnance depots.

Mr. Lee: The Army's central ordnance depots give a very good service. However, as in all areas of defence, we are always looking for means of improving performance and value for money.

Departmental Houses (Basingstoke)

21. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many houses formerly owned by his Department in the Basingstoke constituency have been sold to tenants.

Mr. Lee: Twenty-six houses in my hon. Friend's constituency have been sold to tenants since 1973. The freeholds of a further 40 properties, previously sold on a leasehold basis have been purchased by the tenants. Others are in the process of being offered for sale.

European Fighter Aircraft

22. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of international discussions on the proposed European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Butler: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend and to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) on 23 May at columns *499-500*.

29. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will give further information regarding the future of the European fighter aircraft project.

Mr. Butler: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to my hon. Friends the Members for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) and for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) on 23 May at columns *499-500*.

Nuclear Warheads (Transportation)

23. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received about the hazard to the civilian population of transportable nuclear warheads.

Mr. Stanley: The Ministry of Defence has received a number of letters from hon. Members, local authorities and members of the public about the safety of nuclear weapons in transit.

Trident Missiles

24. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the progress of the Trident programme.

Mr. Butler: Yes.

30. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his most recent estimate of the number of jobs which will be created in the United Kingdom by the Trident D5 programme.

Mr. Butler: As I stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 1 April 1985, at column *511*, the British Trident programme is expected to create, on average, approximately 9,000 job opportunities directly and 7,000 indirectly throughout the period of procurement, with a total of 170,000 man years of direct employment in the United Kingdom and 130,000 indirect man years over the programme as a whole. The number of job opportunities will run at about 17,000 direct and 13,000 indirect during the peak years. In addition, there are a number of British companies competing for work on the American Trident 2 programme, with the potential for further jobs being created in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether a calculation has been made of the number of casualties that would occur were Trident to be fired; and whether this forms a necessary part of an assessment of the deterrent value of the Trident system.

Mr. Butler: The number of casualties that would occur if a United Kingdom Trident missile were to be fired would depend on the targets selected. As was made clear in open government document 80/23, however, the

Government's concept of deterrence is concerned essentially with posing a potential threat to key aspects of Soviet state power.

Cruise Missiles

25. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he remains satisfied with the safety of cruise missile installations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: Safety aspects of these installations remain under close review.

Strategic Defence Initiative

26. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made in discussions about participation in research for the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Butler: We remain in close touch with our allies on all aspects of this important subject.

Arms Control Unit

27. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the work of the arms control unit in his Department.

31. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the role of the arms control unit.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) earlier today.

35. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what current initiatives are being undertaken by his Department's arms control unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: My Department's defence arms control unit is advising my right hon. Friend on how best to support the Government's policy of balanced and verifiable arms control in all the various arms control negotiations.

Warsaw Pact Manoeuvres (Observers)

28. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many observers from his Department have been present at military manoeuvres of the Warsaw pact countries as a result of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act.

Mr. Stanley: Three—two in 1978 and one in 1979.

Royal Dockyards

32. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received about the future management structure of the royal dockyards since publishing his consultative paper; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The Ministry of Defence has received some 80 written representations on subjects relating to the future of the royal dockyards since 17 April. They have concerned various aspects of the proposals and the process of consultation, and express a variety of views. In addition there has been continuing expression of interest from the commercial sector.

NATO (Ministerial Discussions)

33. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the latest ministerial discussions in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on recent ministerial discussions in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Stanley: Eurogroup Ministers met in Brussels on 21 May and Defence Planning Committee Ministers did so on 22 May for their normal spring meeting. Copies of the communiqués issued following both meetings have been placed in the Library.

NATO Contracts

34. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the United Kingdom's success rate in gaining procurement contracts from North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries in the last two years; and how this compares with the corresponding performance of the United Kingdom's allies in the organisation.

Mr. Butler: There are no complete NATO statistics available from which the information requested can be drawn.

American Miniaturised Atomic Mine

36. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the plans to develop a new American miniaturised atomic mine have been revealed to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I understand that this is an aspect of the United States defence programme which is of course a matter for the United States Government. It has not been considered by NATO.

European Approach to Defence

37. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he plans to put before the European allies in the context of the commemoration of 40 years of peace in Europe, for the development of a more cohesive and distinctive European approach to defence.

Mr. Stanley: The North Atlantic Alliance, of which the United States contribution is an integral and fundamental component, remains the foundation of our security policy. We shall, however, continue to seek to strengthen the European pillar of the transatlantic bridge, by means such as those described in chapter 3 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985" (Cmnd. 9430-1).

Nuclear Weapons

38. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average distance between the place of deployment of British nuclear weapons and their refurbishment and maintenance depots.

Mr. Stanley: An average figure would not be meaningful without a statement of the basis on which it is

calculated, which could not be provided without conflicting with the practice of successive Governments in neither confirming nor denying the presence of nuclear weapons at specific locations, nor commenting on methods or routes used for transporting weapons.

Air Staff Target 404

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received from hon. Members on the subject of air staff target 404 and the future of the British helicopter industry.

Mr. Butler: During the last 12 months my right hon. Friend and I received 42 letters from right hon. and hon. Members, many of whom forwarded correspondence from constituents, trade unionists and other interested parties.

In that period, hon. Members also asked four questions in the House.

Irish Forces Personnel (Training)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements exist between the British Government and the Republic of Ireland Government for the training of Republic of Ireland military and naval personnel in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: The Republic of Ireland enjoys the benefit of arrangements for military training we make for all friendly Governments.

Force Levels

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied that current force levels enable him to fulfil all his existing defence commitments and that all specialist services are up to strength.

Mr. Stanley: Successive Governments have recognised that our primary commitment is to NATO, and United Kingdom force levels meet our NATO obligations. We also maintain an out of area capability which is based on giving selected units, whose main roles are within the NATO area, the ability to deploy rapidly at long range in a crisis. Our forces and their capabilities are described in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985" (Cmnd. 9430, volumes 1 and 2). As far as specialists are concerned, there are some shortfalls against requirements in certain areas.

TRANSPORT

M6 (Service Station)

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will accept and implement the offer for a service station on the M6 motorway made by Westmoreland Motorway Services.

Mrs. Chalker: The offer by the present operators, Westmoreland Motorway Services Limited, for a 50-year lease of the Tebay west service area on the M6, has been accepted. My formal acceptance will be issued very soon to the firm.

Bus Services (Deregulation)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received concerning pensions in the context of the deregulation of bus services.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received many representations in respect of pensions for National Bus Company employees, in connection with our proposals to transfer the company's operations to the private sector. I have repeated the Government's undertaking to ensure that the assets of the pension schemes are fully adequate at the time of privatisation to discharge their responsibilities. I have also received representations in respect of pensions for employees of PTE and municipal bus undertakings in connection with the proposals in the Bill to transfer them to public transport companies owned by their parent authorities. I have replied that the Government wish to facilitate an option which will allow employees to remain in the local government superannuation scheme, and we are pursuing this with local government representatives.

Aircraft Safety

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied that the methods used by the Civil Aviation Authority in testing aircraft safety, with respect to emergency exits is adequate; and whether it includes live tests with representative passenger samples.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. The CAA requires, before it grants a certificate of airworthiness for aircraft capable of carrying more than 44 passengers, to be satisfied by a practice test that it can be evacuated in conditions simulating a real emergency and in the time the authority specifies. The authority requires that the "passengers" taking part in these tests shall not have prior knowledge of the situation. Detailed data are recorded, to enable the authority to judge the effect of changes in the seating arrangements which airlines may wish to make after initial certification.

British Rail

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail about the amount of notice to be given to passengers of major changes to operating schedules and about the issuing of revised timetables before such changes come into effect.

Mr. David Mitchell: None. But the chairman and I are agreed on both the need to give as much advance notice as possible and in our regret that some of the local information leaflets about the changes in May were not available in time.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 5 June 1985

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Coast Protection

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any changes to Votes and cash limits for which he is responsible are proposed as a result of the change in departmental responsibility for coast protection.

Mr. Jopling: Responsibility for coast protection was transferred to my Department from 1 April. A Supplementary Estimate will be sought for Class III Vote 3 Agricultural Support, Animal Health, Land Drainage and Flood Protection (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food), which is not subject to a cash limit, to provide for grant-aid of up to £11 million to local authorities undertaking approved coast protection schemes. This will be accompanied by a revised Estimate and corresponding reduction in Class VIII Vote 1 Local Environmental and Planning Services, etc. England (Department of the Environment).

Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the cash limit for Class III Vote 4 Agricultural and Food Services and Support for the Fishing Industry (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) will be increased by £408,000 from £144,365,000 to £144,773,000 to provide for externally commissioned research and development work on coast protection.

At the same time a revised Estimate will be presented and the cash limit for Class VIII Vote 5 Central Administration and Environmental Research (Department of the Environment) reduced by £454,000 from £148,819,000 to £148,365,000. This reduction includes £33,000 in respect of the administrative expenditure associated with coast protection work, which if required will be made available subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate to MAFF later in the year, and £13,000 in respect of the transfer of funds, again subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, from the Department of the Environment to the Department of Education and Science to support additional expenditure on housing management studentships funded by that Department on behalf of the Department of the Environment.

These changes to MAFF Votes correspond with the provisions previously made by the Department of the Environment for the same purposes. No overall change in public expenditure is involved.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorism

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of persons who were initially detained under other Acts, and were charged under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts in each of the years of the operation of the Acts;

(2) how many persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts were charged with *(a)* offences under the Acts and *(b)* offences under other Acts in each of the years of the operation of the Acts.

Mr. Scott: The information in regard to persons detained in Northern Ireland is as follows:

*Persons detained under other Acts and charged under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts 1974, 1976 and 1984**

	Number
1974	—
1975	—
1976	—
1977	19
1978	13
1979	10
1980	10
1981	3
1982	9
1983	3
1984	—
Totals	67

Persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts 1974, 1976 and 1984

	*(a) charged under the Acts**	*(b) charged under other Acts or with common law offences†*
1974	—	—
1975	—	2
1976	—	130
1977	—	81
1978	1	71
1979	3	48
1980	2	101
1981	2	152
1982	5	333
1983	9	464
1984	—	258
Totals	22	1,640

Notes:

* Some of these persons were also charged under other Acts.

† To identify separately persons charged with statutory offences and persons charged with common law offences would involve disproportionate cost.

Plastic Bullets (Injury Statistics)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been injured by plastic bullets in each of the past six years to the latest date.

Mr. Scott: Records of injuries thought to have been caused by batton rounds were first collated in March 1981. The figures for each year since then are as follows:

	Number
1981 (since 17 March)	202
1982	4
1983	7
1984	37
1985 (to 31 May)	1

Primary School Education

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for the future of primary school education in Ballyhalbert, Co. Down; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: On 24 May 1985 the Department of Education for Northern Ireland approved a proposal submitted by the South-Eastern Education and Library Board that Ballyeasborough primary school should close when Victoria primary school, Ballyhalbert, is rebuilt with appropriate permanent accommodation. It also approved the board's proposal to rebuild Victoria primary school for the four teacher category. Progress of the scheme to construction stage will depend on the degree of priority which the board is prepared to accord the project, as well as the overall availability of finance for school building.

Armagh Prison (Strip Searching)

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to explain to the public the strip-searching procedure at Her Majesty's prison, Armagh.

Mr. Scott: I and my ministerial colleagues take every opportunity, in our statements, correspondence and media interviews, to explain the reason for and nature of strip-searching. In addition my right hon. Friend has today published a booklet setting out the facts in full. This will be distributed widely in the United Kingdom and abroad; and I have arranged for copies to be made available to the House.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Leeds Prison

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to relieve the overcrowding at Leeds prison.

Mr. Brittan: Leeds is the most overcrowded local prison in the country. On 4 June 1985 there were 1,292 prisoners there, occupying certified normal accommodation for 624. The staff at Leeds have responded magnificently to the burdens placed upon them, but it would not be responsible to let the present situation continue.

I have, therefore, decided that, in order to relieve the pressure on Leeds, Hull prison should cease to function as a dispersal prison and should assume a local prison role as soon as possible.

In order for Hull to make its contribution as a local prison it will be necessary to increase outlets in the north of the country for sentenced adult male prisoners. I have concluded that this should be done by changing the role of Thorp Arch remand centre to a category C prison.

A discreet post-war wing at Hull will function as a remand centre for young offenders and will take all the juveniles who currently go to Thorp Arch. The other prisoners currently assigned to Thorp Arch will be divided between the Hull remand centre and Leeds prison, where every effort will continue to be made to keep prisoners under 21 separate from the rest of the population. While I naturally regret the movement of prisoners under 21 from a wholly separate establishment to a local prison, these changes will produce one very important improvement. Dividing the population between Hull and Leeds will make visiting markedly easier for the very great majority of the prisoners' families and legal advisers.

It will not be possible to absorb Hull's entire existing population in other suitable establishments immediately. Some 30 long-term prisoners, including category A prisoners, will therefore be retained in A wing at Hull until the new dispersal prison at Full Sutton opens in 1987. The wing will aim to operate a normal dispersal prison regime during this period and is not to be seen as one of the separate units recommended by the Control Review Committee.

I believe that these changes, taken in the round, will enable us to use our resources flexibly and to the best effect. In particular, the intolerable pressure on Leeds will be relieved and the way to improve the regime there will be opened. Detailed planning and discussion will now go ahead on the ground: the target date for the changes is November this year.

Chief Education Officer for the Prison Service

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ealing, North on 17 May, *Official Report*, column *235*, why it was not considered appropriate to upgrade the post of Chief Education Officer for the Prison Service to grade 5; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The duties of the post, which have been carefully examined by senior management and by Home Office staff inspectors, are considered to fall short of the stringent criteria for inclusion in the unified grading structure at level 5.

Prisons (Building Programme)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated total cost of building the 16 new prisons within the prison building programme.

Mr. Mellor: Approximately £340 million at current prices.

Immigration (Sponsorship)

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what checks are normally carried out by the immigration authorities into the credentials of those seeking to act as sponsors for new arrivals to the United Kingdom; and whether such checks were carried out in all cases when examining those seeking to sponsor Tamils arriving from Sri Lanka.

Mr. Waddington: Most people sponsoring passengers arriving in the United Kingdom are their relatives or friends. In some cases before leave to enter or temporary admission is given the sponsor is interviewed by the immigration officer to confirm maintenance and accommodation for the passenger. If there is any reason to doubt the immigration status of the sponsor this is also checked. Similar considerations apply to those sponsoring Tamils arriving from Sri Lanka who seek asylum.

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what responsibilities are normally placed upon those who seek to sponsor new arrivals to the United

Kingdom; and whether such responsibilities were placed upon those who came forward to sponsor Tamils arriving from Sri Lanka.

Mr. Waddington: The responsibility for complying with the terms of temporary admission or of any period of leave to enter lies with the person to whom it is given rather than with the sponsor.

Tamils

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Tamils have been allowed to enter the United Kingdom since 1 January; and how many have since been deported.

Mr. Waddington: The relevant statistics are not routinely maintained by ethnic origin. In the quarter ended 31 March 1985, 5,093 persons holding Sri Lankan passports were admitted to the United Kingdom. No Sri Lankan has been deported between 1 January and 31 May 1985, but 15 Tamils refused entry on arrival were removed between 20 May and 4 June.

Firearms Act

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of recent disclosures of the contents of the report of Sir John McKay's working party on the administration of the Firearms Act 1968, he will now place a copy of the report in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement concerning his Department's recent recommendations to chief officers of police with regard to the Firearms Act 1968 concerning the zeroing of rifles for general sporting purposes and vermin control.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As a result of various representations, further consideration has been given to paragraph 21 of the report of the working party on the administration of the Firearms Act 1968 concerning territorial restrictions. Following consultation with the Association of Chief Police Officers, chief officers have been advised that the zeroing provision should be extended as a matter of course to those who hold certificates for vermin control and general sporting purposes as well as for deer shooting. All chief officers have been asked to amend the advice contained in the report accordingly.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement regarding his recent working party's report into the administration of the Firearms Act 1968, as to *(a)* when he proposes to call for submissions from responsible bodies and organisations, *(b)* by what date such submissions should be received for consideration, *(c)* which organisations he will ask for such submissions, *(d)* on what date the review will take place, *(e)* which organisations will be personally requested to appear before the review body and *(f)* who will represent the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Home Office, respectively, on the proposed review body.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We intend to seek the views of the police and a cross-section of shooting organisations shortly on the operation of the working party's recommendation on the territorial condition, but I am not yet in a position to give further details.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance his Department issued to chief constables *(a)* before April 1984 and *(b)* since April 1984 regarding the circumstances in which a firearms certificate issued under the Firearms Act 1968 should have attached to it a condition stipulating that the firearms and ammunition to which the certificate relates should not be capable of firing in bursts.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Chief officers of police were advised in 1978 that consideration should be given to the imposition of the following condition in cases where it is not possible to specify precisely the weapon which a certificate holder is authorised to acquire:

"The firearms to which this certificate relates shall not be capable of firing in bursts".

No further advice has been issued to chief officers of police since then.

Court Records (Access)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the degree of access to court records given to magistrates, lawyers and law students in their own locality and for purposes of research.

Mr. Mellor: Yes, but if there is any particular problem which the hon. Member has in mind perhaps he would write to me.

TRANSPORT

Channel Fixed Link

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will explain Government policy on the replacement to the A20 between Folkestone and Dover in the light of the assertion in the Department's invitation to promoters on the channel fixed link that this would be built under any circumstances and the Minister's suggestion in the Department's press release of 14 May that this would be very unlikely if the fixed link were not to go ahead.

Mr. Ridley: Improvements to the A20 between Folkestone and Dover remain firmly programmed in the Government's plans. These improvements were not planned to be completed before around the early 1990s. The precise alignment, design and standards of the improvements will depend significantly on the outcome of the British and French Government's decisions on whether or not a Channel fixed link—of whatever sort—is to proceed. This decision is expected to be made about the end of this year. And this timetable should not materially affect the eventual completion date of the necessary improvements.

"Motorways—A National Asset"

Mr. Maude asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of producing and distributing the leaflet "Motorways—A National Asset".

Mrs. Chalker: One and a half million copies of the leaflet "Motorways—A National Asset" were produced at a total cost of £30,275.

Distribution was free through motorway service areas in England, the motoring organisations, Freight Transport Association, the Road Haulage Association, filling stations and police forces.

Airline Pooling Arrangements

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made by the European Economic Community in obtaining details of airline pooling arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In March 1983 the European Commission asked all member states to provide details of inter-airline commercial agreements and the Government did so in accordance with Community obligations. The Commissioner for Transport has recently announced that the Commission is instituting proceedings under Article 169 of the Treaty of Rome against seven member states who have not so far provided the information.

Private Rail Sidings (Grants)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the numbers of private sidings financed using section 8 grants by British Rail, in each year since such grants began, giving the total annual expenditure on section 8 grants in each of these years in both constant and cash prices.

Mr. Ridley: So far 166 grants have been awarded under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974, including 31 in Scotland and 21 in Wales. Most of them included provisions related either to the installation of new private sidings or work on the alteration and replacement of existing sidings. The total value of section 8 grants in each year from 1975, in both constant and cash prices is as follows:

Year	*Number of grants awarded*	*Value of grants at 1985 prices £ million*	*Cash value of grants £ million*
1975	3	1·295	0·485
1976	15	5·379	2·287
1977	19	8·240	3·988
1978	23	16·931	9·048
1979	17	7·504	4·686
1980	20	10·226	7·582
1981	7	5·311	4·330
1982	14	3·863	3·367
1983	17	6·487	5·912
1984	18	7·872	7·497
1985 to date	13	5·679	5·679
	166	78·787	54·861

British Rail (Investment Plans)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each of the investment plans for British Rail, which have had to be submitted to Her Majesty's Government for approval since May 1979, where the application was either rejected or withdrawn, distinguishing which were withdrawn and which rejected, and showing the cost in cash terms in each case.

Mr. Ridley: The information is as follows:

Investment Project	*Date Submitted*	*Action*	*Cost* £ million*
Construction of 3 HST sets for East Coast Main Line†	17 September 1979	Rejected	6·0
Freight Rolling Stock Rolling Programme	9 April 1980	Withdrawn	136·5
Harwich-Zeebrugge train ferry	24 April 1980	Withdrawn	39·5
Advanced Passenger Train for West Coast Main Line (including fixed works)	17 July 1980	Withdrawn	214·5
Advanced Passenger Train for West Coast main line (advance authority for long-lead items)	19 August 1980	Withdrawn	34·5
EMU Rolling Programme	15 December 1980	Withdrawn	114·0
120 Mk III coaches‡	4 November 1982	Withdrawn	23·0
3 fast ferries for Portsmouth—Ryde service	29 March 1983	Rejected	7·5
Cambridge—Royston electrification‖	11 July 1983	Rejected	2·0

* Costs are at prices prevailing at the time of submission.
† Part of a larger submission: 4 HST sets, worth £9·5 million, were approved.
‡ Part of a larger submission: 60 Mk III coaches, worth £11 million, were approved.
‖ Part of a larger submission: Cambridge—Bishops Stortford electrification, worth £10 million, was approved.

Buses

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the number of passenger journeys undertaken in *(a)* each passenger transport executive area and *(b)* in each municipal bus service area in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Ridley: The number of passenger journeys by public transport in areas served by passenger transport executives is publicly available in the three-year plans prepared by each PTE in accordance with the Transport Act 1983. Similar information is not available for areas served by municipal operators. Both PTE and municipal bus operators supply the number of passenger journeys made on their own services to the Department but on the understanding that only aggregate data are published. Total passenger journeys for these operators for the last eleven years are given in table 2.12 in "Transport Statistics Great Britain 1973-1983" HMSO, a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has approved London Buses Ltd's proposal for further new bus purchases in 1986 and 1987.

Mrs. Chalker: I have approved the purchase of 260 new buses in 1986-87 at a cost of £16 million. The new buses will be the first in London Buses' fleet to be

equipped with new design features which will speed up boarding times and improve access for elderly and disabled people. This decision is another example of the Government's commitment to investment by LRT and their subsidiaries in a more modern and efficient public transport system.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to total spending on public transport by each passenger transport executive and each municipal bus service, for each of the last 10 years, showing the percentage contribution towards the total provided by central Government, in each year in each case.

Mr. Ridley: The following tables show the information readily available:

(a) expenditure by Metropolitan County Councils on revenue grants to PTEs, and by district councils with their own bus services on the running of those services, in the period between 1979-80 and 1983-84; and

(b) capital expenditure in respect of PTEs and municipal bus undertakings in the period between 1976-77 and 1983-84.

Direct contributions to these undertakings from central Government comprise fuel duty rebate and new bus grants, details of which are shown in their accounts. PTE and municipal undertakings are primarily funded by their parent authorities which receive substantial grant from central Government towards their general expenditure, which it is not possible to identify in respect of any particular head of spending.

A.—Revenue support for public transport (excluding concessionary fares)

£ million (cash)

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
METROPOLITAN COUNTIES					
Greater Manchester	26·3	34·5	44·3	45·9	49·1
Merseyside	25·1	33·5	40·4	45·4	54·9
South Yorkshire	35·1	38·5	49·3	57·9	60·0
Tyne and Wear	14·3	19·7	25·7	21·7	19·7
West Midlands	15·3	18·3	28·6	34·8	30·3
West Yorkshire	16·5	19·6	45·8	46·0	44·0
Total	132·6	164·1	234·1	251·7	258·0
MUNICIPALS					
Total England	8·8	13·3	19·1	24·0	21·6

B —Passenger Transport Capital Expenditure

£ million (cash)

	1974-75	*1975-76*	*1976-77*	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
*Municipal Undertakings**	n/a	n/a	14·8	12·9	13·3	14·3	17·2	19·2	18·1	†14·2
PTE:										
Greater Manchester Council	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·6	12·8	17·3
Merseyside	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·7	7·8	12·1
South Yorkshire County Council	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14·3	11·3	11·2
West Yorkshire County Council	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·2	8·6	8·8
West Midlands	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11·7	21·0	14·9
Tyne and Wear	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	27·4	19·3	10·1
Total: PTE	n/a	n/a	60·5	80·2	92·3	99·3	101·0	81·9	80·9	74·4

* Include direct expenditure on infrastructure by local authorities.
† Provisional.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Reform

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what preparations he is making to set up the residuary bodies under part VII of the Local Government Bill.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Under Clause 56 of the Local Government Bill, my right hon. Friend is required to establish the residuary bodies on an appointed day or days before the abolition date and to appoint between five and 10 members, including a chairman, to each body.

The residuary bodies will have a considerable job to do between Royal Assent and abolition. They will be identifying the property, rights, and liabilities which will fall to them; they will be preparing to assume their tasks at abolition; they will be identifying and approaching the staff they need; and they will be approaching the successor authorities to ensure that, in the course of the transition to the new structure, satisfactory arrangements are made for specialist GLC or MCC units whose services are needed after abolition.

With that in mind, we are taking a number of steps to ensure that the residuary bodies can be set up as soon as is practicable after enactment of the Local Government Bill and can make rapid progress on these tasks.

First, we have commissioned studies, one by Price Waterhouse in respect of London and one by Peat, Marwick, Mitchell in respect of the metropolitan counties, on setting up the residuary bodies and preparing for the assumption of their responsibilities at abolition.

Second, we are taking steps to identify suitable members of each residuary body. We intend to make initial appointments of a Chairman and perhaps two or more key members of each body on an advisory basis—in accordance with normal precedent—before the Bill is enacted. Parliamentary approval to the expenditure involved in the period before the residuary bodies are formally established is being sought in the Main Supply Estimate for the Department's Central Administration and

Environmental Research Vote, Class VIII, Vote 5. Pending that approval the urgent expenditure will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

In order to facilitate close and effective working between the residuary bodies and successor authorities, we have provided, in an amendment to Clause 56 of the Bill, that one of the members of each residuary body will be appointed from among the members of, and after consultation with, the joint preparatory committee required to be established by the borough and district councils in each area under clause 94.

In making these appointments we shall be looking for individuals committed to winding-up the residuary bodies in the shortest timescale. The qualities we shall be seeking include general financial experience; public and local government confidence — in relation particularly to management of debt and pension funds; and property expertise.

I am pleased to be able to announce that Sir Godfrey Taylor, current chairman of the Southern water authority and a past chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, has accepted my right hon. Friend's invitation to serve in an advisory capacity with a view to his formal appointment in due course as chairman of the London residuary body. On his formal appointment he will be resigning as chairman of Southern water.

These initial appointments will not prejudge the filling of other appointments after Royal Assent. We regard it as essential that each residuary body should work closely with local government in its area. Experience of local government as elected members or officers will be desirable, but should not be such as to give rise to conflicts of interest in regard to the residuary bodies' dealings with successor authorities.

Mount Pleasant Airport

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further expenditure after 1 June he contemplates by the Property Services Agency on the Mount Pleasant airport.

Sir George Young: The Property Services Agency estimates that £89 million will be spent on the construction of Mount Pleasant airport after 1 June 1985. This does not include expenditure under the separate project providing Army accommodation and a port.

Green Belt

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning the concept of country new towns in the green belt.

Mr. Macfarlane: Proposals for such developments would require planning consent in the usual way. Circular 14/85 sets out my right hon. Friend's policy on development in green belt, and Circular 15/84 on land and housing development.

Football and Horse Racing

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, over the past five years, how much Government support has been provided and on what basis for *(a)* horse racing and *(b)* association football.

Mr. Macfarlane: The Government have provided no financial support for horse racing over the past 5 years. The available figures on the Sports Council's grant aid for association football over the period are set out in the following table:

	£
1980-81	
Current grants to the governing bodies	35,862
The Football and the Community Scheme	188,075
1981-82	
Current grants to the governing bodies	28,075
The Football and the Community Scheme	230,045
1982-83	
Current grants to the governing bodies	22,291
The Football and the Community Scheme	384,625 (estimate)
1983-84	
Current grants to the governing bodies	24,323
Capital grants to the governing bodies	199,819
The Football and the Community Scheme	130,175
1984-85	
Current grants to the governing bodies	26,268
Capital grants to the governing bodies	251,885

The governing bodies of association football will also have received grants for capital works prior to 1983-84. Up until that year, however, the Sports Council did not keep records on capital grants paid to individual sports.

Hazardous Waste Inspectorate

Mr. Watson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the first report of the hazardous waste inspectorate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I am glad to welcome the first report of the Hazardous Waste Inspectorate published today. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The report amply justifies the Government's decision to set up this small team of experts to advise on the problems of disposing of hazardous chemical waste. Their initial assessment provides us with a valuable picture of the general standards of hazardous waste management in the United Kingdom.

The report is based on 700 visits, mainly to local authorities and waste disposal facilities, and also to waste producers and regulatory bodies. It shows a disturbing situation. It describes a level of performance in both public and private sectors which too frequently falls below acceptable standards. It offers no evidence of harm to public health. But the report points to failures on the part of operators in their disposal practices, and on the part of authorities in monitoring compliance with licensing requirements and good practice, as reflected in guidance issued by my Department.

The situation calls for prompt action on the part of all concerned. Higher standards of waste management can and should be achieved across the country. Wide variations in standards of site licensing, inspection and enforcement and in levels of charging cause serious distortions in the market. This makes it difficult for responsible operators to invest in a range of high standard disposal facilities.

The Government will therefore meet both the local authority associations and the industry within the next few weeks to discuss what measures they propose to take

within available resources, to secure improvements and to carry out their duties more effectively. Action will be needed in close co-operation with the Health and Safety Executive and its inspectorates concerned.

We will also be considering whether changes should be made to strengthen the law in this field, particularly in relation to tightening up the provisions for enforcement of licensing control. Furthermore, following the recently completed review of the regulations on special waste we are considering a range of proposals concerning waste disposal issues including the possibility of enhancing the responsibilities of waste producers.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers of the Deaf

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how the decision not to remove specialist qualifications for teachers of the deaf was announced; and what subsequent publicity has been given to the decision.

Mr. Dunn: The decision was announced in paragraph 146 of the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469). Around 2,000 copies of the White Paper have been distributed, some to organisations which had expressed an interest in the question of specialist qualifications for teachers of the deaf.

Teacher Training

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list those institutions providing teacher training which offer non-standard entry opportunities.

Mr. Dunn: It is open to any institution providing initial teacher training to admit as special entrants mature applicants who lack the conventional entry qualifications for first degree studies, provided that the institution and its validating body are satisfied that such students have suitable personal qualities, appropriate experience of adult and working life, the intellectual capacity to complete a degree course successfully and competence in the use and understanding of mathematics and English language. A number of teacher training institutions have arrangements whereby they admit students who have successfully completed special access courses, which have been developed to prepare candidates for entry to higher education without the normal entry qualifications. Under the criteria for the approval of initial teacher training courses issued in April 1984, however, at least 75 per cent. of the students entering any one course should possess the normal qualifications for entry to a first degree course, in other words the special entrants should not form more than 25 per cent. of the intake.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the possible closure of the teacher training course at the Polytechnic of North London.

Mr. Dunn: As at 3 June my right hon. Friend had received four representations concerning the proposal made by the Secretariat of the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education regarding the future of initial teacher training at the Polytechnic of North London. The representations drew attention to the particular contribution made by the polytechnic to the training of teachers of ethnic minority origin.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the proposed closure of the teacher training course at the Polytechnic of North London.

Mr. Dunn: Following my right hon. Friend's announcement of target intakes to initial teacher training for the period 1986-89, the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education and the Welsh Advisory Body were asked to advise on the distribution of intakes between public sector institutions. As a first stage in that process the Secretariat of the National Advisory Body issued proposals to institutions as a basis for consultation. I cannot anticipate what advice the National Advisory Body will submit in respect of individual institutions or what decisions my right hon. Friend will take in the light of that advice.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list the establishments offering teacher training which have special provision for *(a)* candidates from ethnic minorities and *(b)* offering experience of teaching ethnically mixed classes.

Mr. Dunn: As indicated in a reply which I have given to another question from the hon. Member today, a number of teacher training institutions have arrangements whereby they admit candidates without the conventional entry qualifications for first degree studies who have successfully completed special access courses for entry to higher education. Such students may include candidates of ethnic minority origin, but information about the number of teacher training students from ethnic minorities is not currently collected. Criteria for the approval of initial teacher training courses issued in April 1984 require that all students should be prepared to teach the full range of pupils whom they are likely to encounter in an ordinary school, with their diversity of ethnic and cultural origins. My right hon. Friend considers that efforts should be made by all teacher training institutions to give all their students some experience of ethnically mixed schools. Many institutions, including those in areas without substantial ethnic minority populations, already take steps to ensure that their students are provided with such experience.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to increase the numbers of trainee-teachers from ethnic minorities in the light of the Swann report.

Mr. Dunn: As indicated in my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 14 March at column 452 and my answer to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) on 19 April, at column 291 my right hon. Friend intends to consult the education service and representatives of the ethnic minorities on ways to increase the proportion of the teacher force recruited from ethnic minority groups. He hopes to be able to make a further statement shortly.

Exchange Teachers

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East of 24 April, *Official Report*,

column 471, whether he will describe the mechanism used by his Department to take fluctuations in exchange rates into account in considering the payment of allowances to teachers on exchange in the United States of America.

Sir Keith Joseph: To ensure full and effectively planned use of the cash-limited Government resources available generally for teacher exchange programmes in any one year, which are designed to cover both the teacher's return air fare and a settlement allowance, a rate of assistance is set for the forthcoming academic year, in consultation with those concerned in the joint advisory committee in respect of each exchange country. In the case of the United States of America, this takes account of long-term forecasts of fluctuations expected in the dollar-pound exchange rate over the year in question and of anticipated movements in air travel rates compared to those affecting exchanges to other countries in the schemes.

Teachers' Unions (Membership)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East of 14 May, *Official Report*, column 106, whether he will appoint an independent body to carry out the review of membership numbers of the teachers' unions or to audit the numbers submitted to him.

Sir Keith Joseph: No. I shall exercise the powers given to the holder of my office under section 1 of the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965 directly, as my predecessors have always done.

Colleges (Staff Ratios)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage change there has been in the student to staff ratios in colleges other than polytechnics over the period 1975 to 1984.

Sir Keith Joseph: Based on a sample of colleges, the percentage change in student: staff ratios for advanced level work between 1974-75 and 1983-84 was as follows:

1974-75 SSR	*1983-84* SSR	*Percentage change*
7·7	9·0	16·9

The ratios are calculated as full-time equivalent student load divided by the full-time equivalent number of lecturers who are involved in teaching.

Similar information in respect of non-advanced level work was not collected prior to 1979-80, and it is therefore not possible to calculate an overall percentage change in student: staff ratios for the period in question.

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the additional cost of awarding all students in higher education a full maintenance grant in each of the categories *(a)* 18 years plus, *(b)* 19 years plus, *(c)* 20 years plus and *(d)* 21 years plus.

Sir Keith Joseph [*pursuant to the reply*, 20 May 1985, c. *309*]: The following are the estimated costs for England and Wales. They are necessarily based on a number of assumptions and thus provide an order of magnitude of the potential costs involved, rather than any precise estimation.

Age of student	*Cost in 1983-84 £ million*
18+	192
19+	163
20+	114
21+	65

SCOTLAND

Tilhill Forestry Limited

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether forestry ploughing operations have been carried out by Tilhill Forestry Limited on land at Shielsknowe, Leithope Forest near Cartertar, Border Region, after refusal of grant aid by the Forestry Commission, and without the approval of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Yes. Almost the whole of the area for which grant aid was refused has now been ploughed and planting is expected to be completed soon.

As I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on 8 May at column *442* about the planting operations at Crichness, the Forestry Commission takes a serious view, which my right hon. Friend shares, of planting proceeding before a decision on grant aid has been taken. He is even more concerned over the action taken by the applicant in the Shielsknowe case as the Forestry Commission had in fact refused the grant application in respect of the greater part of the area after consultations with other authorities, including the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. This is only the second significant case of this nature since the present consultation procedures were introduced in 1974. My right hon. Friend will nevertheless be watching the situation very carefully.

Broadleaved Woodlands

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many forestry grant scheme applications for planting of broadleaved woodlands *(a)* consisting solely of broadleaves and *(b)* in mixture with conifers were approved for grant in each year since 1981-82.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the objectives of the Forestry Commission's policy of diversification by broadleaves of predominantly coniferous upland forests; and how its management practices in re-stocking of forests aim to achieve those objectives.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission uses broadleaved trees in predominantly coniferous upland forests in order to enhance the forest landscape, to increase the diversity of wildlife habitat and to extend the recreational interest.

Management practices in restocking aim to make the most of any naturally occurring broadleaved woodland supplemented by planting where practical, particularly in conjunction with watercourses and the fringes of wetlands and open areas where it will increase the interest and enjoyment of visitors.

PRIME MINISTER

Industrialists (Meeting)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister whether she will place in the Library the statement given by Mr. Bernard Ingham about her meeting with 26 leading industrialists on Tuesday 21 May.

The Prime Minister: I have placed in the Library the press notice issued by my office on my meeting on May 21, 1985 with leading industrialists to discuss their part in the national effort to increase the number of students studying engineering and technology in higher education.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister (1) what representations she made at her meeting with 26 leading industrialists on Tuesday 21 May about supporting engineering courses; and what was their reply;

(2) what response she had from 26 leading industrialists at her meeting with them on Tuesday 21 May about committing their firms to giving substantial and continuing practical help to polytechnics and universities.

The Prime Minister: My colleagues and I had a very useful discussion with the industrialists about the part they can play in the national effort to increase the number of students studying engineering and technology in higher education, in the light of the Government's recently announced £43 million programme to expand relevant first degree and postgraduate output.

The industrialists said that they welcome, and fully supported, the Government's initiative to increase the output of engineering and technology graduates and postgraduates. They committed their firms to giving substantial and continuing practical help to the universities and polytechnics benefiting from the Government's programme. They offered more up-to-date equipment, more help with teaching staff and with the design of relevant courses, and they undertook to provide more sandwich course places and to sponsor more students.

WALES

Orthopaedic Waiting Lists

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of patients on orthopaedic waiting lists have to wait for over 12 months for the appropriate inpatient surgical treatment in each of the health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The available information is given in the following table and refers to the numbers of non-urgent cases waiting for traumatic and orthopaedic surgery at 30 September 1984.

Health Authority	*Percentage of cases on waiting list for 12 months or more*
Clwyd	9·9
East Dyfed	4·4
Gwent	26·9
Gwynedd	17·5
Mid Glamorgan	53·6
Pembrokeshire	42·3
Powys	—
South Glamorgan	37·1
West Glamorgan	9·0

Tinnitus

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list by name and location the aural consultants who have a special interest in the investigation and treatment of tinnitus including the prescribing of masking devices;

(2) how many patients suffering from severe intractable tinnitus have been supplied with masking devices in each of the health authorities in Wales; what percentage this is of patients attending ear, nose and throat clinics annually because of this condition; and what has been the cost of providing such apparatus for the last 12 months for which figures are available;

(3) if he will estimate the percentage of cases referred to aural consultants in each of the health authorities in Wales because of tinnitus who are suffering from the condition because of their present or past occupations.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not held centrally.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales by what mechanisms the Forestry Commission reached agreement with the Welsh water authority and Fountain Forestry Ltd. over site preparations of the land at Blaen-y-Cwm, Llanbrynmair Moors, Powys.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: Following consultations between Forestry Commission, the local authorities, the Nature Conservancy Council and the Severn-Trent water authority on a forestry grant scheme application for land at Blaen-y-Cwm, Llanbrynmair Moors, Powys, the owners, for whom Fountain Forestry acted as agents, agreed to enter into a deed of covenant with the water authority governing the manner in which the site preparations would be carried out. The Forestry Commission's approval to the grant application was conditional upon this convenant being executed.

DEFENCE

Hunt Class Vessels

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make an announcement about the 12th and 13th Hunt class mine counter-measures vessels.

Mr. Lee: I am pleased to announce that following competitive tendering the order for the 12th and 13th Hunt class MCMV's was placed with Vosper Thornycroft (UK) Ltd yesterday.

Mk. 19 Grenade Launcher

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the kind of threat which necessitates the use by United Kingdom forces of 15 Mk. 19 automatic grenade launchers.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. *63*]: The Mk. 19 automatic grenade launcher is a standard infantry weapon for defence against armed attack.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement concerning the installation of the Mk. 19 automatic grenade launcher at Greenham common;

(2) whether other American airbases in the United Kingdom will be equipped with the Mk. 19 automatic grenade launcher.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his replies*, 3 June 1985, c. *63-64*]: I understand that this standard infantry weapon is being issued to a number of USAF bases in Europe, including the United Kingdom.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Customs and Excise (Computer Programmers)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many persons have resigned from the programming and experts computer sections of the computer services division of Customs and Excise headquarters in Southend in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what estimate he has made of the gap between the salary levels of computer programmers in the computer services division of the Customs and Excise headquarters in Southend and comparable positions in private industry in the south-east of England; and what steps he will take to narrow the differential;

(3) why the headquarters of Customs and Excise in Southend have initiated a new programme to engage a private firm to undertake a major computer-based project for the computer services division; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will introduce a regional variation in additional payments to ensure that the Customs and Excise computer services division is in a position to offer comparable salaries to those in private industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

THE ARTS

Government Support

Mr. Dicks asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what has been the total of Government support for the arts over the past five years; and on what basis it has been provided.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is given in the 1985 "Public Expenditure" White Paper (Cmnd. 9428, Volume II, chapter 3.5 on the arts and libraries programme), a copy of which is in the Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC (Office Accommodation, Ealing)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the addresses of any office accommodation in the London borough of Ealing which the European Economic Community is expected to take over; what is the cost of such accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: We are pressing the case for London to be the site of the proposed EC Trademark office. But it has not yet been decided in which EC member state the office will be established, let alone its precise location.

Gibraltar

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Gibraltarians will be issued with the new European Community passport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I can confirm that Gibraltarians will be issued with common format passports.

Angola (Refugee Camps)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether any representative of the British Government has visited any refugee camp in Angola;

(2) whether any representative of the British Government has visited any camp in Angola administered by the South West Africa People's Organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: No representative of Her Majesty's Government has visited either a refugee camp in Angola, or a camp administered by the South West Africa People's Organisation in Angola during the last four years, the period of which records are readily available.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) on 17 May, *Official Report*, column *254*, it is British Government policy to rely solely on the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to monitor and act on human rights violations in the South West Africa People's Organisation camps.

Mr. Rifkind: We are naturally concerned about all violations of human rights wherever they occur. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as the international body charged with ensuring the welfare of refugees, is in the best position to decide whether any violations of human rights have indeed occurred in SWAPO refugee camps.

ENERGY

Energy Conservation

46. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he is satisfied with progress made with energy conservation in industry.

Mr. David Hunt: Though much remains to be done, there is now a great deal of activity. Over 16,000 senior executives have attended the 40 breakfast-time briefings we have held throughout the country over the last 18 months, and three-quarters have gone on to take action to cut their energy costs.

EMPLOYMENT

EC (Unemployment Rates)

Mr. Prescott asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the unemployment rates in percentage and absolute terms in each of the European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following is the information, available in the Library, relating to April 1985, using

national unadjusted series compiled by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (SOEC) and also including standardised unemployment rates compiled by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The latter are only available in the form of rates. The national unadjusted figures are not comparable because of differences in definitions and coverage of the statistics, while the OECD standardised rates take account of these differences as far as possible. The rates calculated by SOEC are based on the percentage of civilian working population, while the OECD standardised rates are calculated as a percentage of the total labour force.

EC Unemployment

	SOEC Unadjusted, national definitions		*OECD Standardised rates*	
	Thousands	*Percentage rate*	*Latest month*	*Percentage rate*
Belgium	546·2	13·2	March	14·1
Denmark	263·0	9·7	*	*
France	2,338·3	10·3	March	10·1
Germany	2,304·6	8·6	March	8·8
Greece	79·5	2·1	*	*
Ireland	228·0	17·6	*	*
Italy	2,928·1	12·8	October 1984	10·0
Luxembourg	2·7	1·7	*	*
Netherlands	748·1	13·1	March	13·3
United Kingdom	3,272·6	12·4	March	13·5

* not available

Air Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the management study referred to in the annual district report for 1983 carried out in district L of the Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate of the effectiveness of means used to obtain compliance with the legal requirements of air pollution control legislation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Health and Safety Executive propose to publish shortly a paper on measuring the effectiveness of the Executive's field activities.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and what, aids and adaptations the Manpower Services Commission has financed to help disabled people in each of the last five years; and how many people have been abble to take up employment as a result.

Mr. Alan CLark: The number of new aids financed by the Manpower Services Commission in each of the last five years was as follows:

	Number
1980-81	775
1981-82	765
1982-83	1,067
1983-84	1,268
1984-85	1,640

The number of adaptations financed was:

	Number
1980-81	83
1981-82	94
1982-83	117
1983-84	170
1984-85	145

Aids issued included electronic braille storage and retrieval devices, electric wheelchairs, telephone amplifiers and micro computers. Adaptations financed included ramps for wheelchair users, stairlifts and toilet alterations.

Approximately 1,675 disabled people were able to take up employment during this period as a result of these measures.

Factory Inspectors

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many factories in the west midlands were visited by factory inspectors for each of the last five years for which records are available; what percentage this figure represents of the total number of factories in the area; and whether he is satisfied with the present number of factory inspectors in post in the west midlands.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1985, c. *226-7*]: I wish to correct the statistics given in my reply, which should have read as follows:

	Number of premises visited	*Percentage of premises visited in relation to the total number of premises in the area per cent.*
1985 to date	1,252	6
1984	3,289	17
1983	4,792	24
1982	4,891	31
1981	5,065	18
1980	figures not available	

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Privatisation

9. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what effects upon the performance of British industry have resulted from the privatisation programme of his Department.

Mr. Tebbit: In general, companies returned to the private sector have recorded both increases in efficiency and improved performance. This has benefited not just the companies concerned, but their customers and the economy as a whole.

Research and Development

10. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the progress of Government action to disperse research and development activities of private firms and public bodies to the regions.

Mr. Trippier: No. It is not Government policy to influence the location of private sector research and development activities. There are currently no plans to relocate DTI laboratories to other regions.

"Burdens on Business" (Review)

21. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what factors he took into account when reaching his conclusions on recommendations arising from the review "Burdens on Business".

Mr. Trippier: We have not yet announced conclusions on most of the recommendations. They are being urgently followed up in our drive to reduce the burden of regulation on business as a whole, which is being co-ordinated by my right hon. and noble Friend, the Minister without Portfolio.

Secondary Schools (Mini-enterprises)

22. **Mrs. Ann Winterton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what his Department is doing to encourage the spread of mini-enterprises in secondary schools.

Mr. Trippier: We have set ourselves a target to encourage each secondary school to carry out some form of enterprise activity during 1986.

Warship Building Yards

23. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress has been made in privatising the warship building yards.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 25 March that he had given his consent to the sale of Yarrow Shipbuilders to GEC. Brooke Marine has been sold to a management consortium. I expect the sales of all the warship yards to be completed by 31 March 1986.

British Leyland

24. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the funding of BL development plans for its new lean-burn engine.

Mr. Norman Lamont: BL's engine plans are covered in the company's corporate plan. This does not request further Government funding for BL.

Special Steels Industry

25. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he proposes to approve the establishment of an absolute monopoly in special steel production in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We are still considering the phoenix II joint venture proposals from BSC and GKN for their engineering and special steels businesses. The competition effects of the phoenix II proposals will be among the factors taken into account.

Scottish Highlands and Islands

26. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the overseas trading potential of the highlands and islands of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I am satisfied that the Highlands and Islands of Scotland have a great deal to offer markets overseas. The region makes a significant contribution to the United Kingdom's export performance, through its exports of the wide range of goods produced in the area, including Scotch whisky, Harris tweed, high quality textiles and knitwear, craft goods, electronics and engineering and food products.

Manufacturing Industry (North-west)

27. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department proposes to take to reverse the decline of the manufacturing industries in the north-west.

Mr. Trippier: The Government are continuing their policies of revitalising both the national and regional economies, providing a healthy economic framework in which manufacturing industry can continue to invest, expand and become increasingly more competitive in both home and overseas markets. In addition to the various forms of Government financial assistance available, we are successfully building on the natural resilience and ability to generate self-help at the industrial level that is inherent in many parts of the north-west. This is shown by the continuing rapid growth of new firms in the north-west; between the end of 1979 and the end of 1983 it has been estimated that the stock of business actually increased by 7 per cent.

Trading Policy

28. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what account Her Majesty's Government take of human rights considerations when formulating their policy towards Government trading with another country.

Mr. Channon: The Government believe that civil trade with other countries should be governed by commercial considerations. However, human rights are one of the many factors taken into account when examining licences to export defence or paramilitary equipment.

East Midlands (Innovation Programme)

29. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the progress of the innovation programme on the east midlands.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Department's support for innovation is a national facility and is not targeted specifically on any one area. However, since the start of SFI in May 1982, some 8 per cent. of all applications received were from firms based in the east midlands and

to date £30·1 million of assistance has been offered to east midlands firms out of a total of £451·5 million committed nationally.

Waste Recycling

30. **Mr. Bendall** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on progress to date made by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary with co-ordinating responsibility for waste recycling.

Mr. Trippier: I have received a considerable amount of correspondence and advice about my new role. I will be consulting other Ministers shortly about matters which span Departmental responsibilities. I am also planning a number of visits to selected recycling plants and research organisations in order to promote the cause of economic recycling and to identify priorities.

Chemical Weapons

31. **Mr. Mikardo** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether licences are required for the export of chemical weapons or of weapons-grade chemicals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Chemical weapons are under export licensing control, as are the most common chemical intermediates which could be used to make chemical weapons. The position is kept constantly under review.

Small Businesses (Data Base)

32. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he proposes to introduce a data base on small businesses for the following separate categories: one to 20 employees, 21 to 50 employees, 51 to 100 employees and 101 to 200 employees.

Mr. Trippier: I am aware of the value of information on businesses by sizebands of employees but, having considered the matter with other departments concerned, I have at present no proposals to impose what could be regarded as an additional form-filling burden on small businesses.

Local Enterprise Week

33. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what reactions he has received about the arrangements for Local Enterprise Week.

Mr. Trippier: During Local Enterprise Week 1985 some 700 events were organised throughout the country and I visited close on 60 small firms organisations in 40 towns. I believe the week was very successful in attracting publicity for the impressive range of locally based organisations providing support, at community level, to help small businesses set up and grow.

44. **Mr. Carttiss** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the outcome of his Department's Local Enterprise Week.

Mr. Trippier: During Local Enterprise Week 1985 just over 700 events were organised throughout the country and I visited close on 60 small firms organisations in 40 towns. I believe the week was very successful in attracting publicity for the impressive range of locally based organisations providing support, at community level, to help small businesses set up and grow.

Small Businesses

34. **Mr. Andy Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current availability of funding for small businesses.

Mr. Trippier: Most funding for small businesses comes from the banks and other financial institutions, which have taken a number of initiatives in recent years to improve the range and availability of funds. Government incentives, notably the loan guarantee scheme and the business expansion scheme, have also assisted in extending the finance available to small firms from both institutions and individuals.

Steel Works (Sheffield)

35. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has recently held discussions with the chairman of the British Steel Corporation regarding the projected closure of the British Steel Corporation Tinsley Park works in Sheffield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have not discussed this closure with the chairman. It is a matter for the commercial judgment of the Corporation.

Manufacturing Industry

36. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of the United Kingdom's manufacturing output was exported during the last 12 months.

Mr. Channon: The lastest available figures are for the 12 months ended June 1984. During that period the ratio of exports to United Kingdom manufacturers' sales was approximately 27 per cent.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

37. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the operation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Yes.

Airbus Industrie

38. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when and how the management and accounting procedures of Airbus Industrie are to be changed.

Mr. Trippier: Since 1 April 1985, there have been several new appointments to the senior management team of Airbus Industrie. As in any industrial company, the new management will be reviewing AI's performance and procedures, and improvements will be discussed with the industrial partners as and when necessary.

Romania

39. **Mr. Andrew Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions on trade have taken place recently with representatives of the Romanian Government.

Mr. Channon: The 12th annual session of the UK-Romanian trade commission took place in London 15-19 April 1985, during which I met the leader of the Romanian

delegation, Deputy Minister Stanciu. A series of wide ranging discussions on trade and associated matters took place that week.

Manchester Steel Ltd.

40. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he has taken to seek to secure the future of Manchester Steel Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The future of Manchester Steel's operations are for the company's new owners to decide on their commercial merits.

Small Firms

41. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures he is taking to encourage small firms to seek appropriate advice and training.

Mr. Trippier: I believe that both advice and training are vital to the success of small businesses. Indeed, evidence clearly indicates that the success rate amongst small firms is significantly higher when they take advantage of advice and training. This is why a major theme of Local Enterprise Week 1985 has been to demonstrate the wide range of business services, training and advice available to small firms within their own locality.

To demonstrate the value of training in business my Department and the Manpower Services Commission recently jointly produced a video called "The Road to Success". Over 1,100 copies of the video have been provided to local organisations to show to those involved in small businesses during Local Enterprise Week and subsequently.

Aerospace Industry

42. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further representations he has received about the future of the British aerospace industry.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. and hon. Friends are in touch with representatives of the British aerospace industry who regularly make their views known to them as issues arise which affect the future of the industry.

Batteries

43. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the extent of import penetration of overseas-manufactured batteries into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Channon: Import penetration of overseas manufactured batteries into the United Kingdom has risen from 18 per cent. in 1980 to 37 per cent. in 1984. Despite this rise, the United Kingdom still retains a positive balance of trade in batteries, though this has been in decline since 1980.

Inward Investment

45. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what help his Department gives to British organisations seeking to attract inward investment to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Channon: In addition to DTI funding of the promotional activities of the five English regional development organisations, the Invest in Britain Bureau within my Department, in collaboration with all the main British public sector inward investment bodies and the private sector, is mounting a major promotional campaign —Britain Means Business—over the coming year. The campaign will be in addition to the bureau's normal promotional activities, and will aim to consolidate and improve upon the United Kingdom's standing as the preferred location in Europe for direct investment from overseas.

Helicopter Industry

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has received from hon. Members on the subject of the Westland W.30 helicopter and the future of the British helicopter industry.

Mr. Butcher: My colleagues and I have received several representations from hon. Members on this subject including three letters during the course of the last six months.

Insolvency Bill (Directors' Liability)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the provisions of the Insolvency Bill in respect of the personal liability of directors will require any subsequent amendment to the Companies Acts.

Mr. Fletcher: In formulating its proposals in the Insolvency Bill in relation to wrongful trading the Government considered that such proceedings should be available only to the liquidator and that therefore any imposition of personal liability on directors and others should benefit creditors as a whole. As a consequence, to maintain a consistent approach, Sec 630 of the consolidating Companies Act 1985 (which was previously Sec 332 of the Companies Act 1948) will be amended so that the civil remedy under the "fraudulent trading" clause will also be available only to a liquidator. Creditors will no longer be able to institute proceedings for their own individual benefit.

I am not aware of any other contemplated or consequential amendments to the Companies Act 1985 in this respect although the Insolvency Bill proposals are of course still before this House for approval.

EC (Non-tariff Barriers)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the progress being made in the dismantling of non-tariff trade barriers within the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Useful progress has been made recently with agreement on the single customs document and the new approach to standards, and we shall be pressing for decisions on the liberalisation of trade in financial, professional and transport services when the Commission's action programme on the internal market is presented to the European Council in July.

EC (Exports)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to encourage British exporters to the EEC to sell cif.

Mr. Channon: It is already the normal practice of my Department and of the British Overseas Trade Board to recommend to exporters there prices should be quoted cif in the local currency.

British Railways Board (Property Report)

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the British Railways Board's property activities will be published.

Mr. Fletcher: The report is published today. The Commission was asked to report on British Rail's efficiency and costs in relation to its property activities, including the acquisition, management, development and disposal of land.

The Commission notes that British Rail recognises that the future outlook for its property activities is one of a declining work load on sales of surplus property and growing work on developing and managing operational land for commercial purposes. It also notes that the work load in managing the unrewarding tail of burdensome properties will continue.

The Commission makes a number of specific recommendations aimed at improving the management of British Rail's property, including the appointment of a director of property of equal status with British Rail's other functional and sector heads, responsible for maximising return from the whole estate, and for a member of the British Railway's Board to be given specific responsibility for property matters.

The Commission believes that better procedures are needed for releasing land no longer required for operational use. Greater use of private sector expertise is recommended in several areas of the board's activities, including in identifying and valuing the potential of land no longer required, where more positive procedures are recommended for assessing the scope for enhancing realisable values.

The Commission also made some criticism of the implementation of BR's programme of property sales.

The Commission acknowledges the board's success in developing and exploiting its operational estates, but considers that a more systematic review of development opportunities would be beneficial; that greater competition between developers should be encouraged; and that marketing techniques should be improved, again perhaps drawing on outside expertise.

The report highlights British Rail's large number of unattractive, low value properties including closed branch lines, and suggests that the sale of such properties at prices which do not fully cover the selling costs involved might nevertheless be in the board's longer term interests if it brings relief from subsequent management costs. But such decisions need to be taken against more accurate assessments of the costs of retaining and managing each property. The report also recommends a review of British Rail's liabilities in respect of property no longer needed for the railway.

The Commission also recommends a range of proposals aimed at improving the operational efficiency of the board including a computer-based financial and management accounting and costing system.

Finally, as is usual in such references, the Commission was asked to consider whether the board is pursuing a course of conduct which operates against the public interest. They conclude that while their inquiries identified room for improvement in many areas none of the shortcomings identified, taken singly or together, could be judged to operate against the public interest. The board will be producing its preliminary response to the Commission's findings in three to four months and my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Transport, will make a statement on this response at that time.

Institute of Production Engineers (Exhibition)

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the Institute of Production Engineers to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall during the week commencing Monday 10 June.

Mr. Butcher: Yes. Arrangements have been made for such an exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall to take place from Monday 10 June to Friday 14 June 1985.

Local Enterprise Agencies

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* all local enterprise agencies currently operating giving their full address and details of jobs placed.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to the reply*, 4 June 1985, c. *134*]: A list of the names and addresses of the 252 local enterprise agencies currently operating has been placed in the House of Commons Library. The Department has no information on the jobs saved or created by individual agencies.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will report on the recent Local Enterprise Week giving details of each undertaking known to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to the reply*, 4 June 1985, c. *135*]: During Local Enerprise Week 1985 some 700 events were organised throughout the country by many different undertakings and it would therefore be impossible to list each one.

Early reaction to the Week has been very positive according to feedback reaching my department.

I was particularly pleased by the support generated at community level to help small businesses start up and grow and the success of Local Enterprise Week in attracting publicity to those locally based organisations.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Smoking (Premature Deaths)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has sent to district health authorities or to community physicians advising them that time and money should not be used in informing hon. Members of premature deaths due to cigarette smoking.

Mr. John Patten: None. One district health authority chairman has received copies of correspondence between an hon. Member and my right hon. and learned Friend, in which he expressed the opinion that the postage to hon. Members of purely campaigning material was an inappropriate charge on National Health Service funds.

Departmental Records

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a list of the official forms used by staff of his Department to record *(a)* work done and *(b)* information obtained in the investigation of actual or suspected fraud by social security claimants.

Mr. Whitney: During an investigation into social security benefit fraud, staff may use any of the following official forms to record either work done and/or information obtained:

Memoranda Sheet
Narrative Report
Employer's Statement of Earnings
Witness Statement
Record of Interview
Special Investigator's Report
Report of missing Order Book/Girocheque

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether photographs or copies of photographs have been obtained by staff of his Department through liaison with the police in the investigation of actual or suspected fraud by social security claimants.

Mr. Whitney: Neither photographs nor copies of photographs of social security claimants are obtained from any source in connection with benefit fraud investigations.

Member's Correspondence

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a reply to his letter of 20 March, regarding lodging charges, to the hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton);

(2) when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a reply to his letter of 27 February, regarding his Department's contributions towards charges for nursing homes, to the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten).

Mr. Whitney: I have written to my hon. Friend today.

Reye's Syndrome

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of Reye's syndrome in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland were reported to the communicable diseases surveillance centre in each year since the voluntary scheme was started.

Mr. John Patten: The number of cases of Reye's syndrome notified to the communicable diseases surveillance centre under the voluntary reporting scheme is as follows:

Number of cases (per calendar year)	*Northern Ireland*	*England, Wales and Scotland*
1982	9	39
1983	13	40
1984	14	57

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many times the Committee on Safety of Medicines has examined the alleged association between Reye's syndrome and aspirin; when were these occasions; what evidence has been considered; whether there has been liasion with the United States Food and Drug Administration; and when it expects to conclude its present consideration of the syndrome.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the right hon. Member to my replies to him on 13 March and 3 April at columns *168-9* and *637*. The committee has been in contact with the office of the United States Surgeon General of the Public Health Service, with the centre for diseases control in Atlanta, and with bodies in the United Kingdom. The committee gave further consideration to this issue at its April 1985 meeting. Their advice is that the available evidence has not established a causal link between aspirin use and Reye's syndrome. The committee intends to keep this issue under review and will consider any new evidence that becomes available.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the figures for each year for which they are available of the number of deaths in the United Kingdom and in Northern Ireland from Reye's syndrome; and if he will give figures for the same year and for the same age group for the deaths from whooping cough.

Mr. John Patten: The available figures are given in the table.

The numbers of deaths from Reye's syndrome have been obtained from the communicable diseases surveillance centre, which since August 1981 has run a surveillance scheme jointly with the British Paediatric Association. The deaths are those which meet either the clinical and biochemical or the histological criteria as used in their case definition for Reye's syndrome.

The figures for deaths from whooping cough are among those routinely collected by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Number of deaths reported to BPA-CDSC Reye's Syndrome Surveillance Scheme and the number of deaths from whooping cough (ICD(9)033) United Kingdom, Northern Ireland 1982 to 1984

	Total under 15	*Under 1*	*1-4*	*5-9*	*10-14*
UNITED KINGDOM					
1982					
Reye's Syndrome	27	9	9	4	5
Whooping Cough	16	12	3	—	1
1983					
Reye's Syndrome	*22	8	8	3	2
Whooping Cough	5	3	2	—	—
1984					
Reye's Syndrome	29	12	10	4	3
Whooping Cough	1	1	—	—	—
NORTHERN IRELAND					
1982					
Reye's Syndrome	2	2	—	—	—
Whooping Cough	—	—	—	—	—
1983					
Reye's Syndrome	2	2	—	—	—
Whooping Cough	—	—	—	—	—

	Total under 15	Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-14
1984					
Reye's Syndrome	1	—	1	—	—
Whooping Cough	—	—	—	—	—

* One age not known

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply *Official Report*, 3 April, columns *635-6*, if his Department has any explanation for the higher incidence of Reye's syndrome in Northern Ireland than in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: It is too early to draw conclusions about any apparent difference in the estimated incidence; it may be explained in part by a greater diagnostic awareness and readiness to report the condition. The communicable diseases surveillance centre will continue to monitor reported cases.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representation he has received from the student committee of the College of Speech Therapists concerning remuneration of speech therapists supervising students; what reply he is sending; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have received a petition from the Student Committee of the College of Speech Therapists and National Union of Students about the payment of allowances to speech therapists supervising students on clinical placements. Payment of these allowances, where appropriate, is a matter for individual health authorities. They have been asked to honour an existing Whitley Council agreement and the Student Committee has been so advised.

Poliomyelitis

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have contracted polio in the last five years; and what action is being taken to ensure complete vaccination of the population.

Mr. John Patten: The number of poliomyelitis cases reported to the communicable diseases surveillance centre in respect of England and Wales is as follows:

	Number
1980	2
1981	6
1982	3
1983	3
1984	3

We are committed to a voluntary immunisation policy. Polio immunisation is an integral part of the childhood immunisation programme and as such is continuously promoted by health professionals and through literature published by the Government funded Health Education Council.

Cochlear Implants

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cochlear implants have been performed on deaf children; what have been the results of these operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We are not aware that any deaf children in England have been given a cochlear implant, which is a technique still at an experimental stage. I understand that, although they have been used for some profoundly deaf adults, the fitting of such devices to children is not regarded as appropriate by most British clinicians since their use could prevent the children from benefiting from other possible developments in years to come.

Autistic People (Services)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his policy towards the recommendations which have been submitted to him by the Birmingham and district society for autistic children in respect of special residential/day facilities for autistic adults in the west midlands;

(2) if he will make resources available to localities in the west midlands region to enable them to make provision for the construction of residential autistic communities.

Mr. John Patten: I shall write to the hon. Member once we have had the opportunity to consider the recent correspondence from the Birmingham and district society copied to us for information. It is for health and local authorities to determine the detailed provision of service for autistic people in their areas in the light of local needs and the availability of resources, and I understand that the regional health authority is inviting the society to a meeting to discuss its ideas.

NHS (Hospital Closures)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of hospitals for the mentally handicapped which have either closed down or have had a reduction in staff manpower in the west midlands region in each single year since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No hospitals for the mentally handicapped have been approved for complete closure in the west midlands region since 1979. Information on the number of staff employed in such hospitals for the period 1979 to 1982 can be found in the publications, "The Facilities and Services of Mental Illness and Mental Handicap Hospitals in England", copies of which are in the Library. For more recent information, the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service hospital beds have closed each year since 1979 as a result of the closure of wards within hospitals that still remained open; and in which hospitals these beds were located in each case.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. *108*]: I see no sensible purpose in keeping centrally a full inventory of furniture in each of our

hospitals. We only acquire information centrally on permanent partial closures when they are sufficiently significant to require formal consultation. In every case bed closures are only approved by Ministers when they are no longer necessary for patient care and the resources involved can be put to better use elsewhere. The total number of beds involved in such closures, by year of approval is as follows:

	Number of beds
May to December 1979	n/a
January to December 1980	17
January to December 1981	705
January to December 1982	262
January to December 1983	598
January to December 1984	785
January to March 1985	207

n/a=Not available.

Note: The above figures do not include the closures at six hospitals for which we do not have information on bed numbers. These hospitals are indicated in the following table.

Details of the individual hospitals are as follows:

Partial hospital closures (permanent) approved

Region and Area/District	*Hospital*	*Number of Beds*	*Date approved*
(I) MAY TO DECEMBER 1979			
North West Thames			
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	St. Mary's, Harrow Road	n/a	August 1979
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	St Charles	n/a	August 1979
Oxford			
Oxfordshire	Cowley Road	n/a	November 1979
Berkshire	Canadian Red Cross	n/a	November 1979
(II) JANUARY TO DECEMBER 1980			
North West Thames			
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	West Middlesex	7	October 1980
Mersey			
Cheshire	Canford Lodge	10	October 1980
(III) JANUARY TO DECEMBER 1981			
Northern			
Cleveland	North Tees DGH	8	July 1981
Yorkshire			
Humberside	Withernsea	24	June 1981
Wakefield	Stanley Royd	60	November 1981
Wakefield	Snapethorpe	24	November 1981
Trent			
Lincolnshire	Skegness and District	9	May 1981
Nottinghamshire	Highbury	13	May 1981
North West Thames			
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	St. Mary's, Harrow Road	127	September 1981
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	West Middlesex	60	October 1981
Wessex			
Hampshire	King George's	10	January 1981
Wiltshire	Westminster Memorial	8	January 1981
Wiltshire	Royal National	18	January 1981
Wiltshire	Royal United	24	April 1981
Wiltshire	St. Martin's	215	April 1981
Wiltshire	Royal United	16	September 1981
South East Thames			
Greenwich and Bexley	Queen Mary's	20	October 1981
North East Thames			
Essex	St. Margaret's	13	April 1981
Oxford			
Oxfordshire	Longworth	10	January 1981
Berkshire	Canadian Red Cross	46	February 1981
(IV) JANUARY TO DECEMBER 1982			
East Anglian			
West Norfolk and Wisbech	Bowthorpe	20	May 1982
West Suffolk	St. Leonard's, Sudbury	12	November 1982
North West Thames			
Brent and Harrow	Shenley	20	February 1982
North West Hertfordshire	Harpenden Memorial	8	October 1982
Mersey			
Liverpool	Royal Liverpool Childrens	39	November 1982
Macclesfield	Collar House	n/a	December 1982
West Midlands			
Hereford and Worcester	Kidderminster General (Bewdley Road Branch)	44	May 1982
South East Thames			
West Lambeth	South Western	39	December 1982
North East Thames			
Enfield	Highlands	80	October 1982
(V) JANUARY TO DECEMBER 1983			
Yorkshire			
Leeds Western	Leeds General	70	February 1983
Trent			
North Derbyshire	Walton	19	April 1983
Leicestershire	Ellen Towle Home	20	June 1983
Leicestershire	Leicester Royal Infirmary	46	June 1983
Leicestershire	Groby Road	87	June 1983
North West Thames			
Victoria	Banstead	40	December 1983
Mersey			
Macclesfield	Congleton War Memorial	11	February 1983
Sefton	Fazakerley	n/a	January 1983
West Midlands			
Walsall	St. Margaret's	38	February 1983
Mid-Staffordshire	Chase	10	November 1983
East Birmingham	Yardley Green	30	October 1983
Dudley	The Guest	59	December 1983
Dudley	Burton Road	76	December 1983
Dudley	Wordsley	12	December 1983
Dudley	The Corbett	37	December 1983
South East Thames			
Maidstone	Preston Hall	31	January 83
North East Thames			
Waltham Forest	Whipps Cross	12	August 1983
(VI) JANUARY TO DECEMBER 1984			
Northern			
South Tees	Poole	60	March 1984
South Tees	Middlesborough General	26	September 1984
Yorkshire			
Wakefield	Pinderfields	22	March 1984
Harrogate	Scotton Banks	26	October 1984
Trent			
Central Nottinghamshire	Forest	16	February 1984
Central Nottinghamshire	Victoria	106	February 1984
North West Thames			
North Bedfordshire	Clapham	20	January 1984
Victoria	Banstead	48	March 1984
Victoria	St. Stephen's	27	September 1984
Victoria	Westminster	9	September 1984
Hammersmith and Fulham	West London	17	June 1984
Hammersmith and Fulham	Charing Cross	30	August 1984
Enfield	Highlands	23	July 1984
Hounslow and Spelthorne	West Middlesex	34	September 1984
Hounslow and Spelthorne	Ashford	24	Septmber 1984
East Hertfordshire	Hertford County	24	December 1984
Mersey			
Liverpool	Newsham	10	July 1984
Liverpool	St. Paul's Eye	11	July 1984
Liverpool	Alder Hey Childrens	24	July 1984
South Western			
Gloucester	Lydney and District	7	February 1984
West Midlands			
North Staffordshire	North Staffs Royal Infirmary	49	February 1984
North Birmingham	Highcroft	80	May 1984
South Warwickshire	Warenford	33	August 1984
South Warwickshire	Stratford	51	August 1984
Wessex			
Salisbury	Westminster Memorial	8	July 1984

Region and Area/District	Hospital	Number of Beds	Date approved
(VII) JANUARY TO MARCH 1985			
Yorkshire			
Scunthorpe	Brumby	7	March 1985
North West Thames			
Paddington and North Kensington	St. Charles	12	February 1985
Ealing	Ealing (St. Barnard's Wing)	134	February 1985
North West Hertfordshire	Harpenden Memorial	8	March 1985
Mersey			
Liverpool	Sir Alfred Jones Memorial	6	January 1984
Liverpool	Newsham	16	January 85
Oxford			
Aylesbury Vale	Tindal	24	March 1985

n/a=Not available.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 6 June 1985

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Broadcasting Offences

Mr. Gorst asked the Attorney-General whether any infringements of the Marine Etc. Broadcasting Offences Act by the United Kingdom-based companies whose products and services have been advertised or promoted on Laser 558, have been brought to his attention; and what prosecutions he proposes to initiate.

The Attorney-General: Certain possible infringements of the nature specified have been drawn to the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions and either have been or are being investigated by the police at his request. In a number of cases the investigation has disclosed no offence under the Act by any United Kingdom-based company. However the director is awaiting a report in relation to the current investigations.

"Killing for Company"

Dr. Mawhinney asked the Attorney-General, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Peterborough. *Official Report,* 11 March, column 5, when he intends to tell the hon. Member for Peterborough whether he will prosecute the author and publishers of "Killing for Company: The Case of Dennis Nilsen."

The Attorney-General: I do not intend to institute any proceedings under the Obscene Publications Act 1959 against the author or publishers of "Killing for Company: The Case of Dennis Nilsen."

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Import Penetration

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set out the basis of the assertion by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), on 1 May, *Official Report,* column *246,*that every 1 per cent. increase in import penetration costs British industry 250,000 jobs.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The correct figure should have been 80,000 jobs.

House of Fraser

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* any information concerning the financial backers behind the successful bid to take over the House of Fraser which was available to him at the time of his decision not to refer the bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission or which has become available since then.

Mr. Fletcher: For reasons of commercial confidentiality the Secretary of State does not publish the information available to him in connection with his consideration of mergers.

Value Added and Managed Data Services

Mr. Wood asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the consultative document on the future licensing of value added and managed data services will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The consultative document has been published today. Copies may be obtained from the Library.

The current 1982 VANS general licence needs to be revised in order to take account of the Telecommunications Act 1984; to give effect to the commitment given in October 1984 on the future licensing of managed data network services; and to correct the anomlies that have come to light since the grant of the general licence in October 1982. At the same time it is proposed that the opportunity should be taken to carry out a significant liberalisation of the licensing requirements governing the provision of enhanced telecommunication services.

The consultative document sets out the Government's thoughts on these issues. We wish to take account of the views of all those with an interest in the provision of enhanced services concerning their future licensing and are asking for comments to be submitted by the end of July

Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the volume of world trade in manufactures in 1984 as a percentage of the 1980 figure; and how this compares with the corresponding figures for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Channon: Since 1980, the volume of world trade in manufactures, as measured by the exports of the main manufacturing countries, is estimated to have increased by around 13 per cent. The corresponding figure for the United Kingdom is about 2 per cent.

PRIME MINISTER

Pay Review Bodies

Mr. Forth asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the reports of the pay review bodies.

The Prime Minister: The 1985 reports of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body and the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine have been published today. Copies are now available in the Vote Office. The Government are grateful to the members of the review bodies for these reports and for the time and care which they have put into their preparation. The report of the Top Salaries Review Body has not yet been submitted to the Government.

The report of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body recommends increases which would add 7·3 per cent. to the armed forces' 1985-86 pay bill. These recommendations will be implemented in full from 1 April 1985. The additional costs in excess of the 3 per cent. allowance in the defence budget for increases in pay and prices will be offset by economies or reductions elsewhere in the defence programme.

The report of the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body recommends increases which would in 1985-86 add 6·4

per cent. (including increases in distinction awards to consultants) to the pay bill for hospitals and community health services and 6·2 per cent. to the pay bill for the non-cash-limted family practitioner services. The recommendations will be implemented with effect from 1 June 1985. The additional costs to the pay bill of the cash-limited services in 1985-86 will be 5·4 per cent. and for the family practitioner services 5·2 per cent.

The reports of the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine incorporate the results of the reviews of the salary scales of these professions on which this body has been working since its establishment in 1983. These reports accordingly recommend a range of salary increases for different grades which would add 9·0 per cent. to the 1985-86 pay bill for these groups. The increases in basic pay recommended for qualified nurses and midwives in the main clinical grades range from 8·4 per cent. to 14·3 per cent. and for analogous grades in the professions allied to medicine from 7·6 per cent. to 16·6. There are lower increases recommended for trainees, unqualified staff and administrative grades. The recommendations will be implemented in two stages. All members of these groups will receive an increase of 5 per cent. (or the whole amount of the award where this is less) from 1 April 1985, with the balance of the recommended increases, which embody the review body's proposals for salary restructuring, on 1 February 1986. By that date the salary scales recommended by the review body will be in full operation. The additional costs to the pay bill of the cash-limited services in 1985-86 will be 5·6 per cent.

The cost of these awards in 1985-86 for the health authorities will be met within existing cash limits.

Pensions will be based on the salaries actually in payment in accordance with the principle set out in my written answer on 13 April 1984 at column *383*.

The pay rates and scales resulting from the decisions will be promulgated as soon as possible. The Government will be considering separately certain recommendations on points of detail.

Israeli Foreign Minister

Q23. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on her meeting with the Foreign Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Shamir.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave him on Tuesday 4 June at columns *149-150*.

Engagements

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 6 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I will be attending a dinner given by Premier Zhao Ziyang of the People's Republic of China.

Nicaragua

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers the action taken by the President of the Common Market Commission in providing aid and a special trade agreement with the Republic of Nicaragua; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The European Community has not entered into any special trade agreement with the Republic of Nicaragua. The only aid provided to Nicaragua has been in the framework of the Community's regular food aid programme and its programme for non-associated developing states, which have to be approved by the Council of Ministers under standard procedures.

ENERGY

Atomic Energy Special Constabulary

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if the Atomic Energy special constabulary ever takes part in exercises which are not strictly related to nuclear installations.

Mr. Goodlad: No.

Coal Industry

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many jobs have been lost in the coal industry since January 1984 in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Great Britain; and how many jobs he expects to be lost in the next three years.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand from the National Coal Board that the number of men on colliery books on 7 Janauary 1984 was 13,436 in Scotland and 186,164 in Great Britain. On 18 May 1985 the numbers were 9,705 and 168,416 respectively. I can make no estimate of future numbers, which will depend on a number of factors.

Gas Industry (Privatisation)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, when considering the privatisation of the gas industry, he will give full consideration to and opportunity for workers' participation n the industry.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As my right hon. Friend said in his statement to the House on 7 May, we propose to make generous provision to enable all who work in the industry to acquire shares and thus to take a new stake in the company's performance and success.

Offshore Licensing

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish figures in the *Official Report* to show the amounts received in the financial year 1984-85 from their share of offshore licensing revenue by *(a)* the Isle of Man and *(b)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The amounts paid to the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland during the financial year 1984-85 were £2,763,157 and £51,174,030 respectively.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Dublin Plan (Food Aid)

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information was provided at the European Commission's co-ordination meeting *(a)* on 21 February and *(b)* on any subsequent date, concerning the quantities of the Community share of the emergency food assistance promised under the Dublin Plan which have arrived in Ethiopia, Sudan, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso;

(2) what information he now possesses concerning the quantities of the Community share of the emergency food assistance promised under the Dublin plan which have arrived in Ethiopia, Sudan, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Mr. Raison: A further co-ordination meeting was held on 31 May by the European Commission and the member states of the European Community. The following information on deliveries was made available, which brings up to date and revises that provided to my hon. Friend on 14 May at columns 93-4.

Deliveries of food aid between December 1984 and May 1985 by the European Community, tonnes of wheat or wheat equivalent

	Committed before 4 December	*Committed after 4 December*	*Total*
Ethiopia	70,000	*54,000	124,000
Sudan	10,500	*46,500	57,000
Chad	16,000	*27,100	43,100
Mali	8,000	30,000	38,000
Mauritania	8,000	—	8,000
Niger	17,000	15,000	32,000
Burkina Faso	5,500	11,000	16,500

* includes some foods other than cereals expressed in equivalent cereal quantities.

Africa (Food Shortages)

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are taken by his Department to ensure that Her Majesty's Government are kept informed of the extent to which European Community pledges in connection with the current food shortages in Africa have been implemented.

Mr. Raison: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to him on 13 May, at columns 19-20.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Private Members' Bills

Mr. Adley asked the Lord Privy Seal (1) if he will list the Bills which have been presented under the ten-minute rule for each year since 1970; what was the name of the principal sponsor; which Bills have been *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected by the House; and which in category *(a)* have subsequently entered the statute book;

(2) if he will list the Bills which have been drawn in the top 20 in the ballot for each year since 1970; what was the name of the principal sponsor; and which of these Bills has subsequently been enacted;

(3) if he will list the Bills, other than Government Bills, not presented under the ten-minute rule or drawn in the top 20 ballot, which have been published for each year since 1970; what was the name of the principal sponsor; and which of these Bills has subsequently reached the statute book.

Mr. Biffen: The information is not held centrally in the form that is requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

List of Members

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will make a statement as to why there are no copies of the List of Members available for the use of right hon. and hon. Members from the Vote Office in the Members' Lobby.

Mr. Biffen: The List of Members, which is issued by the Vote Office for the use of Members, is published twice a year in January and June. The new list is about to be printed and will be made available as soon as possible. Stocks of the present list have run out, and it is not considered financially viable to order a reprint.

TRANSPORT

Philippine Airlines

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions have taken place recently between his Department and Philippine Airlines concerning his decision last year to terminate the three-year-old reciprocal agreement on landing rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when next negotiations will continue between his Department and Philippine Airlines on the Government's decision concerning permit CAIR/PR/5; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what reasons were given to the Philippine Government for his decision to cancel the air agreement that allowed Philippine Airlines to operate three flights per week between Manila and London.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Under article 13 of the United Kingdom-Philippines air services agreement of 13 January 1955, there is no requirement to give reasons with a notice of termination. The notice of termination was the result of a disagreement about the number of frequencies required to meet demand consistently with fair competition on the route between the United Kingdom and the Philippines.

Representatives of the British and Philippines aeronautical authorities met in May to discuss future arrangements for scheduled services between their two countries. They asked their respective airlines to discuss future needs on the London-Manila and Hong Kong-Manila routes and to report their conclusions before Government consultations resume in July.

I hope that the consultations will lead to a resolution of the existing dispute and that new arrangements will be made for the continuation of air services between the two countries on a mutually acceptable basis.

Air Traffic (Landing Agreements)

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Transport what existing landing agreements in the far east and Asia which could involve British companies are coming up for renegotiation in 1985.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We believe that air services agreements should provide the basis for fair competition between the airlines of each country.

The only air services agreement affecting the far east and Asia which is subject to formal renegotiation this year, is that with the Philippines.

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many times in the last five years his Department has been taken to court by foreign airlines about landing agreements; and what was the judgment in each case.

Mr. Micheal Spicer: Over the last five years there have been two court cases involving permits for foreign airlines. Last year a provisional variation of Philippine Airlines' permits was upheld by the High Court in June but quashed by the Court of Appeal when made final in July. There has not yet been a full hearing on the current case involving Iberia Airlines.

London-Australia Air Services

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the share in percentage terms of the London-Australian transit market for the most recent year available and the last five years of *(a)* the Malaysian Airline system, *(b)* Singapore Airlines, *(c)* Philippine Airlines, *(d)* Indonesia Airlines, *(e)* Thai Airways, *(f)* Cathay Pacific and *(g)* British Airways.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is not the Department's practice to disclose commercial information about the activities of individual airlines.

Okehampton Bypass

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the design and statutory procedures for the northern route of the Okehampton bypass; and when he expects construction work on the bypass to start.

Mrs. Chalker: As with any new road scheme, the detailed design and statutory procedures for such a project would take several years.

Thames Piers

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future of the Thames piers presently owned and operated by the Greater London council.

Mrs. Chalker: In a consultation document issued last July, it was proposed that the piers be transferred to the boroughs in which they are situated. Representations have since been received from a number of interested parties stressing the importance of the piers to passenger and pleasure boat operators on the Thames and hence to the amenity and leisure uses of the river. The function of promoting such uses of the Thames rests with the Thames water authority. We have therefore reached the view that the most appropriate successor authority for the piers would be the Thames water authority, which is willing to take them on and operate them.

British Airports Authority

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to seek professional financial advice in connection with the proposed privatisation of the British Airports Authority.

Mr. Ridley: The Department of Transport will be appointing financial advisers in connection with the proposed privatisation of the British Airports Authority. Merchant banks interested in being considered for this work are being invited to make written submissions to the Department by 14 June.

British Rail (Surplus Land)

Mr. Alexander asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state his policy towards the sale of British Rail's surplus land in the light of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on British Rail's property activities, Cmnd. 9532.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government's general policy towards British Rail—as towards all other public authorities — is that all land surplus to requirements should be offered for sale as soon as practicable.

The MMC makes no criticism of the board's decision to sell its surplus property, but it says that the implementation of this decision was deficient in some respects and I have asked the board to produce a detailed response to these points, when it replies to the report later in the year.

I welcome the considerable contribution that BR has made to its finances from the sales programme so far. The MMC has made a number of constructive proposals for improving BR's handling of its property, and I shall be looking to British Rail to come forward with continuing programmes for the disposal of further surplus land. It is not the function of public authorities to speculate in the property market, and it is in the interests of the country and the railway that surplus land should be put to productive use in the private sector without delay.

WALES

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what plans are envisaged for the location of possible future nuclear waste depositories in Wales; and what geological work has been carried out to date.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is the task of the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Executive to identify and develop disposal facilities for low and intermediate level radioactive wastes in the United Kingdom.

NIREX is currently giving priority to seeking at least two possible sites, in addition to Elstow in Bedfordshire, for a near-surface facility for shorter-lived wastes and is expecting to report later in the year. Any detailed geological investigations to confirm the suitability of the chosen sites will follow the procedure announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment on 24 January 1985 at column 1146.

NHS Hospitals (Mid-Glamorgan)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether Mid-Glamorgan area health authority has been approached by any private medical company with a view to private sector management of National Health Service hospitals within the county or has been or is involved in any negotiations on this basis.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am informed that the authority has not been approached and is not involved in any such negotiations.

Afforestation

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the area of land newly afforested in the year to 31 March distinguishing between *(a)* coniferous plantations and other forestry schemes and *(b)* those proportions planted by the Forestry Commission and private landowners, respectively.

Mr. Stradling Thomas: The information is as follows:

New Planting

Types of Planting	*Forestry Commission (hectares)*	*Private Landowners (hectares)*	*Totals (hectares)*
Conifers	147	884	1,031
Broadleaves	12	34	46
TOTALS	159	918	1,077

These figures are provisional. Planting statistics for 1984-85 will be published by the Forestry Commission in its next annual report.

Felling Licences

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many Forestry Commission felling licences have been granted to private individuals or organisations in Wales in the year to 31 March; and what was the total area of hard and softwood timber so felled.

Mr. Stradling Thomas: The total number of felling licences granted by the Forestry Commission for the thinning and clear felling of woodland in Wales in the year to 31 March 1985 was 139. The total area of timber felled under licence in the year is not known as the Forestry Commission does not normally monitor the situation on the ground after granting a licence, unless replanting conditions are involved and these conditions are due to be fulfilled.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons under the age of 21 years were unemployed in Rochdale in the years 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is available in the Library. The numbers of persons under the age of 20 years, who were unemployed in the former Rochdale travel-to-work area in October of 1982, 1983 and 1984 were 1,542, 1,534 and 1,563, respectively. Figures are not available for those aged under 21.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people under the age of 25 years have been unemployed for *(a)* between six months and one year, *(b)* between one year and two years and *(c)* more than two years in the London borough of Newham.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 11 April 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available, in the East Ham, Plaistow and Stratford jobcentre areas, which correspond closely to the London borough of Newham, 1,946 had been unemployed for between six months and one year, 1,286 for between one year and two years and 954 for over two years.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many pople under the age of 21 years in *(a)* the London borough of Newham, *(b)* the London borough of Croydon, *(c)* the city of Westminster and *(d)* the London borough of Southwark have never had a job since leaving school.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library.

Unemployed school leavers—9 May 1985

London Borough	*Under 18 years*	*18 years*
Newham	616	262
Croydon	309	186
Westminster	223	156
Southwark	487	264

No information is separately available of those aged 19 and 20 years.

Southampton Skillcentre

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a further statement on the future of the Southampton skillcentre and annexe.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) on 4 June 1985 at column *125*. The chairman of the Manpower Services Commission has decided to retain the provision at Southampton. He took this decision in the light of a reappraisal of the financial viability of the annexe, following commitment of local support for further business for it, with which my hon. Friend was associated.

Community Programmes (Leicester)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he is yet in a position to report on the renewal by Leicester city council of its various community programme projects; and if he will list the organisations involved and the numbers of people liable to be on the various programmes;

(2) how many places have been allocated under various community programme projects within Leicester city council for the period 1985-86; how this compares with the previous 12 months; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many places have been allocated under community programme projects within the city of Leicester; and how this compares with the previous 12 months.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Asbestos Removal (Faslane)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment if there will be any danger to the adjacent work force at Faslane through windborne asbestos during removal.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many Health and Safety Executive staff will be allocated to supervise the removal of asbestos from Faslane.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. Responsibility for ensuring the safe removal of asbestos lies with those undertaking the work. Such work is subject to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation. The Health and Safety Executive is the enforcing authority at these sites.

Health and Safety

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Employment what legislative and non-legislative changes have been made to the provision for health and safety at work since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since 1979 20 sets of health and safety regulations imposing new controls have been made and a substantial volume of outdated legislation has been repealed, revoked or amended. Eight approved codes of practice and a considerable amount of guidance literature have been published by the Health and Safety Commission and Executive.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the numbers killed or injured in each standard category of employment at their place of work in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any proposals for improving health and safety at work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Health and Safety Commission programmes of work, which my right hon. Friend has approved, are set out in its "Plan of Work 1985-86 and Onwards."

Parental Leave

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he intends to support the proposed European Economic Community directive on parental leave when he meets with the European Economic Community Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are analysing the responses of interested parties in the United Kingdom to our recent consultation exercise on this draft directive, and my right hon. Friend will bear these views in mind when the Council of Ministers discusses the subject. The Government's view is that the matters covered by the draft directive are best dealt with between employers and employees according to their own priorities, needs and circumstances rather than by Government or Community intervention. The Government are also concerned at the potential costs and administrative burden such a measure would impose on employers, and we strongly believe that here and in Europe we should be focusing our energies and efforts on the main problem that faces us all — unemployment — rather than on improving the position of people who already have jobs.

ENVIRONMENT

Cayman Turtle Farm

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's Government intend to permit future imports of products from the Cayman turtle farm.

Mr. Waldegrave: Applications to import products of captive-bred turtles from the Cayman turtle farm will continue to be considered on their merits by my Department, in the light of scientific advice from the Nature Conservancy Council. Article VII of the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora specifically allows imports of captive-bred specimens of species such as sea turtles, which are listed on appendix I of the convention.

The Cayman turtle farm has already had considerable success in breeding turtles in captivity, both for commercial purposes and to assist in the conservation of endangered wild turtles. The farm has not taken any turtles or eggs from the wild since 1978.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what quantity of turtle products have been imported into the United Kingdom from the Cayman turtle farm since 1 January 1984.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department's records show that the following turtle products have been imported into the United Kingdom from the Cayman turtle farm since 1 January 1984:

14 pieces of shell
8 shells
20 skins
36 scutes

Turtles (Products)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's Government intend to permit imports of products from any turtles coming from the wild or from ranches.

Mr. Waldegrave: In accordance with the European Council CITES regualation (No. 3626/82) the Department does not normally permit the import of wild sea turtle products. Imports of ranched sea turtle products may be permitted in some circumstances.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to conduct a public inquiry into options for radioactive waste storage and disposal.

Mr. Waldegrave: The options for radioactive waste management are currently being examined by the Environment Select Committee, which is receiving evidence from a number of organisations and individuals. We shall take its report fully into account in subsequent decisions, along with the views of the radioactive waste management advisory committee, the conclusions of the study of best practicable environmental options being undertaken following the Holliday report, and other studies carried out by my Department. The reports containing this material will be published, and will be the product of an extensive process of consultation and inquiry which I am confident will ensure that the best options have been identified for the future.

Sea Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why the Control of Pollution (Territorial Sea) Regulations 1984 have been revoked.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Control of Pollution (Territorial Sea) Regulations 1984 were made under section 56 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and were designed to bring certain small areas of esturial water within the control of

part II of that Act. Section 56 permits only the prescription of areas of "territorial sea"; it has now been concluded that all esturial waters cannot be properly covered by the term "territorial sea". The 1984 regulations were therefore largely ineffective in controlling that small part of the esturial waters which they were designed to cover.

Multiple Occupation

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the results of his Department's pilot survey of houses in multiple occupation, forming the first part of its research on houses in multiple occupation.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) on 3 June at columns 33 and 34.

Dolphins and Killer Whales

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards applications to import dolphins or killer whales into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department has not granted any permits to import dolphins or killer whales since 1983. I am aware of public concern, and it is clear that there are widely differing opinions about the value of dolphinaria. I have therefore decided to appoint an independent adviser to consider whether the educational, research and breeding benefits of dolphinaria and similar establishments in the United Kingdom are of sufficient value to justify the import and display of live cetaceans. Advice will also be sought on the standards that should be applied to dolphinaria if they can be justified on educational, research or breeding grounds. The review will also take account of recent EC CITES regulations which increased the conservation status of small cetaceans. The views of operators and conservation bodies will also be sought. I am currently arranging for a suitable adviser to be appointed, and I hope to make a further announcement shortly. Any applications to import further dolphins or killer whales from the wild to the United Kingdom will be determined in the light of this review, which I expect to complete within six months from the date of the appointment of my adviser.

Asbestos Removal (Faslane)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much asbestos to be removed from Faslane is in the loch itself; and whether any is situated in the area where it is intended to pile drive for the new jetty.

Sir George Young: A recent survey has found traces of asbestos on the bed of the loch where some of the new jetties are to be built and consideration is now being given to the further corrective action, if any, required to deal with such waste. The present contract to decontaminate part of the site does not extend to the loch.

Accident Prevention

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department has issued since 1979 to local authorities on planning, engineering and building in the context of accident prevention.

Sir George Young: A circular was issued in March 1984 on planning controls and hazardous developments. The Department has written on six occasions to local authorities advising them of circumstances in which certain types of dwellings may present safety risks as a result of possible structural instability. This advice concerned Airey houses, Orlit dwellings, Bison wall-frame dwellings, Taylor Woodrow-Anglian buildings and other dwellings constructed of large load-bearing panels. The Building Research Establishment has published advice from time to time to local authorities and others on building safety.

Social Needs

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what new indications of social needs have been developed by his Department since 1979.

Sir George Young: The list of indicators used for assessing social need in relation to the designation of local authorities under the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978 was originally set out in a written parliamentary reply on 13 June 1978, at columns 468-78. Additional information derived from the national dwelling and housing survey (1977-79) was reflected in revisions to the list of indicators, shown in a parliamentary reply on 14 May 1981, at columns 324-30. Since then the list has remained unchanged, although new information about deprivation derived from the 1981 census and other sources has subsequently been taken into account. A note by my Department (Information Note No. 2), listing the indicators and explaining how they are applied, was placed in the Library of the House on 15 February 1983.

Housing Improvements

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total expenditure by local authorities on improvements to their own housing stock in each year since 1978-79 at constant prices.

Sir George Young: Total expenditure by local authorities in England on improvements to their own housing stock, including conversion, capitalised repairs, energy conservation and environmental works, in 1984-85 prices is as follows:

	£ million
1978-79	852
1979-80	1,101
1980-81	860
1981-82	723
1982-83	1,040
1983-84	1,185
1984-85	*1,095

* Forecast.

Unfit Dwellings

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of unfit dwellings cleared by local authorities in each year since 1978-79.

Sir George Young: Estimated numbers of dwellings demolished or closed under slum clearance action in each year from 1978-79 to 1983-84 appeared in table 3 of the Department's press notice number 6 published on 9 January; a copy is available in the Library.

Homes for the Elderly

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total amount of public funds made available by the Housing Corporation during each of the past five years for the provision of homes for the elderly;

(2) what is the amount of public funds made available by the Housing Corporation during each of the past five years for the provision of homes for the elderly by the Abbeyfield Society.

Sir George Young: Since 1981-82, the Housing Corporation has financed the development costs of housing association projects within an approved development programme agreed by my right hon. Friend. The Housing Corporation's estimate of expenditure on schemes for the elderly, including leasehold schemes for the elderly, since 1981-82 is as follows:

	£ million
1981-82	129
1982-83	165
1983-84	182
1984-85	*195
1985-86	†226

* provisional estimate of out-turn expenditure
† allocation

Detailed expenditure on provision by the Abbeyfield Society is not readily available. In these years, this has represented between 2 and 4 per cent. of the corporation's expenditure on schemes for the elderly.

Hazardous Waste Disposal

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the report of Her Majesty's Hazardous Waste Inspectorate regarding waste disposal facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration Control (Airline Staff)

9. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to prevent airline staff entering immigration control offices at airports to seek payment for return tickets from persons whose eligibility to enter the United Kingdom is in the process of being examined.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. and learned Friend has done so. Airline and other carrying companies have been informed that they will not be given access, for the purpose of ticketing, to a passenger held in detention without that person's consent. This will apply before and after any decision to refuse entry.

Prison Population (Report)

12. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has studied the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders report "The Highest Ever Prison Population", a copy of which has been sent to him; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. My right hon. and learned Friend has already announced the action he is taking immediately to provide more prison places. Our longer-term strategy remains on course.

Police Federation

14. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about his meeting with the Police Federation on 16 May.

16. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what matters were discussed when he last met the Police Federation; and if he will make a statement.

26. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on his recent official visit to the annual conference of the Police Federation.

Mr. Brittan: I addressed the annual conference of the Police Federation on 15 May and responded to a speech by its chairman. I took note of what he said, particularly about resources, manpower and some aspects of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, although I did not accept that all the anxieties expressed were well-founded.

Primary Purpose Rule

15. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about the implementation by entry clearance officers of the primary purpose rules.

Mr. Waddington: Representations about the application of the primary purpose rule have been received from several sources, including right hon. and hon. Members.

Prevention of Terrorism Act

17. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Mr. Waddington: Yes.

Victims of Crime (Report)

18. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received representations in response to the Government statement "Compensation and Support for Victims of Crime".

Mr. Mellor: Letters have been received from the National Association of Victims Support Schemes and, through hon. Members, from two local schemes asking for central Government funding for victims support schemes.

Civil Defence (Disasters)

19. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the distinction between the establishment of a civil defence capacity to deal with civil disasters as opposed to wartime emergencies.

Mr. Mellor: Without derogating from the priority that must be given to implementing the 1983 Civil Defence Regulations, we believe that our commitment of extending the Civil Defence Act 1948 to allow civil defence

resources to be used for peacetime emergencies is both appropriate and further indication of the humanitarian nature of civil defence.

Criminal Statistics

20. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time between a person being charged and brought to justice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The average waiting time from committal to trial in the Crown court in England and Wales in 1984 was 14·3 weeks overall, and 10·1 weeks for those defendants who spent some or all of this period in custody. We have in hand a programme of measures to curb delays, including the commencement this year of field trials of time limits on the bringing of criminal proceedings.

Data Protection Act

21. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce legislation to amend the Data Protection Act to cover manually held police records.

Mr. Waddington: No. As I made clear during the passage of this legislation, it is the use of computers to process personal information which increases the potential threat to the individual and which justifies special measures. The Act is specifically aimed at automatically processed data and it would not be appropriate to extend its provisions to manual records, whether held by the police or by any other body.

Auld Report

22. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to introduce legislation to implement the recommendations of the Auld report.

Mr. Mellor: The Government will seek an early opportunity to introduce legislation to deregulate shop opening hours.

Experiments on Animals

23. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the proposals contained in the White Paper on experiments on animals.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about his proposals to amend the Cruelty to Animals Act.

Mr. Mellor: The response so far to the White Paper published on 15 May has been generally welcoming.

Holloway Prison

24. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about conditions in Holloway prison C.I. unit.

58. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about conditions in Holloway prison C.I unit.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend is well aware of the concern which has been expressed about conditions in Holloway's C.I. unit. The future role of Holloway is under consideration by the project committee which will be reporting in July to advise on how the prison can best be developed. We expect that report to deal with C.I. unit among other matters and we now await the advice of the project committee.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make an official visit to Holloway prison.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so at present. My noble Friend, who has responsibility for prisons, visited Holloway on 29 April.

Immigration Rules

25. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to ensure that immigration officers conform to paragraph 2 of the immigration rules.

Mr. Waddington: Every effort is made to ensure that the staff of the immigration and nationality department are aware of their responsibilities and are professional and impartial in their approach. If any member of staff is found to have acted contrary to paragraph 2 of the immigration rules, or to the preamble to part 2 of those rules, disciplinary action will be taken against him.

Voluntary Services Unit

27. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what level of resources he proposes to make available in the next year to the voluntary services unit.

Mr. Mellor: Provision has been sought in Supply Estimates for 1985-86 (Class IX Vote 7) for expenditure of £9·4 million in grants administered by the voluntary services unit, excluding grants for the support of work with refugees.

Drug Abuse

28. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to increase the numbers of police officers assigned to combat drug abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend is expecting to receive shortly a report from the Association of Chief Police Officers containing its recommendations for increased police action to combat the problem of drug misuse. He will give that report urgent and serious consideration.

Mr. Alhaji Umaru Dikko

29. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce his decision on the application of Alhaji Umaru Dikko for political asylum.

Mr. Waddington: Mr. Dikko's solicitors have today been informed that my right hon. and learned Friend has refused his application for asylum. My right hon. and learned Friend is still considering the application made by the Nigerian authorities for Mr. Dikko's extradition. This involves consideration of matters additional to those relating to the asylum application.

Civil Defence

30. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the annual spending on civil defence research and the development over the past two years.

49. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for future expenditure on civil defence research.

51. **Mr. Waller** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for future expenditure on civil defence research and development.

54. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the annual civil defence research and development spending over the past two years.

Mr. Brittan: Expenditure on civil defence research and development, including scientific staff costs, for 1983-84 and 1984-85 was £732,000 and £616,000 respectively. The estimate for 1985-86 is £978,000 and includes £185,000 for extra-mural work undertaken in 1984-85. It is intended that the present level of expenditure should be maintained over the next three years.

Police Forces (Strength)

31. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking in the light of the increasing level of vacancies in police forces in England and Wales.

Mr. Brittan: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter).

Prison Medical Service

32. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on complaints by prisoners against the prison medical service.

Mr. Mellor: A prisoner who wishes to complain about an aspect of medical services in prison may use the normal range of internal complaints machinery. Subject to the provisions of Standing Order 5 (which is published and a copy of which is in the Library), a prisoner may also pursue a complaint through his Member of Parliament and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. A prisoner also has the right to petition the Queen, Parliament and the European Commission of Human Rights. If the hon. Member has a particular point in mind I will do my best to answer it.

Illegal Animal Fights

33. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in the Metropolitan police area were convicted of organising illegal animal fights involving dogs and cats in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Information collected centrally does not distinguish offences of organising fights with dogs or cats from other offences under the Protection of Animals Act 1911.

Broadcasting Act 1981

34. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in conjunction with the Independent Broadcasting Authority, he will review the operation of section 4(1)*(f)* of the Broadcasting Act 1981 relating to impartiality.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend is not persuaded of the need for a review of this kind.

Television Programmes (Subtitling)

35. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to meet the Governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation and chairmen of independent television authorities to discuss the subtitling of television programmes.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply which I gave to questions from him on 21 May at columns *381-83*.

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

36. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Brittan: Apart from social occasions, I last met the Commissioner on 25 March when I put to him the points raised at the meetings I held in February and March with right hon. and hon. Members for constituencies within the Metropolitan police district to discuss his strategy report. The subjects discussed included drugs, racial attacks, crime prevention, victim support schemes, schools liaison, the force reorganisation and the Commissioner's policy for posting of senior officers.

County Council Elections

37. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the effect of the electoral system on the results of the recent county council elections.

Mr. Mellor: None.

Young Children

38. **Mrs. Jill Knight** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has completed arrangements to ensure that no person with a criminal record of sexual offences towards children will henceforward be employed at public expense in any job where he or she is placed in charge of young children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As indicated in the pursuant reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) on 27 March at column *247*, the report of the review of these issues is expected by the end of June.

Jersey

39. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to pay an official visit to Jersey.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to make such a visit.

NATO Civil Defence Committee

40. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what civil defence research and development subjects have been considered by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation civil defence committee.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), on 13 November 1984 at column *201*. The committee does not initiate or sponsor research and development which is a matter for member nations, but in its work takes into account as appropriate the latest information available.

Community Radio

41. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the licensing of community radio.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Since the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) on 23 January at columns *417-8*, we have received about 400 letters on community radio, together with a broadly similar number of telephone inquiries. Most of the approaches have been from persons wishing to set up community radio stations.

TV Concessionary Licensing

42. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received about the television concessionary licensing system in the last 12 months.

Mr. Giles Shaw: About 275 hon. Members and 450 members of the public have written in the last 12 months about the concessionary licence scheme for retired and disabled people in residential care.

Young Offenders

43. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has recently discussed the results of his short, sharp shock policy for young prisoners with prison governors and young offenders.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend visited Medomsley senior detention centre on 26 April to see for himself the operation of the new consistent detention centre regime. During the visit he naturally discussed it with the governor, and met staff and spoke to a number of inmates. He formed a very favourable view of the way the regime is developing.

Police National Reporting Centre

44. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will initiate a study into the role of the police national reporting centre.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Security Service (Ombudsman)

45. **Mr. Aitken** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will bring forward proposals for an ombudsman for the security service.

Mr. Brittan: In her statement on the Security Commission's report on the Bettaney case on 9 May 1985 at columns 897-8, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister indicated that the new Director-General of the Security Service had been asked to consider what developments he would propose by way of internal outlets for the expression of grievances or anxieties of individual members of the Service. When we have received the Director-General's report on this aspect of the management of the service, my right hon. Friend and I will, in considering his proposals, take into account the views that have been expressed in the House about the merits of an external outlet for such grievances or anxieties.

Football Stadia (Policing)

46. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with policing arrangements at football stadia in the Metropolitan police district.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The arrangements for policing football matches in the Metropolitan police district generally work well, but they are kept under constant review.

Licensing Laws

47. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the future of the licensing laws.

Mr. Mellor: The preliminary results from the Office of Population, Censuses and Survey's study of drinking in Scotland, published on 21 May, show that there has been some increase in consumption of alcohol in Scotland since the licensing law was changed in 1976, but that it is unlikely that the increase is a direct consequence of the change in the law. My right hon. and learned Friend will want to consider carefully all the relevant considerations including both the preliminary findings and the full report on the survey, to be published later in the year, before deciding whether relaxations in the permitted opening hours of licensed premises in England and Wales should be introduced.

Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984

48. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the operation to date of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The major part of the Act has yet to be brought into force, but we intend that it will be implemented on 1 January 1986.

Part IX, which establishes the Police Complaints Authority and makes other changes to the police complaints and disciplinary system, came into effect on 29 April. It is too early at this stage to comment on how it is working.

Section 106, which provides for arrangements to be made in each police area for consultation between the community and the police came into force on 1 January this year. My right hon. and learned Friend issued guidance on these arrangements on 25 January. Arrangements under this section now exist in most parts of England and Wales.

Sections 66 and 67, which prescribes the mechanism for consulting about the draft codes of practice to be made

under the Act, and for bringing them before Parliament, also came into effect on 1 January. Drafts of the codes of practice were published for consultation on 10 January and my right hon. and learned Friend hopes shortly to lay before Parliament an amended draft, revised to take account of the comments received. The codes themselves will not however become effective until the implementation of the provisions of the Act to which they relate.

Youth Custody

50. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons between the ages of 17 and 21 years are currently held in *(a)* detention centres and *(b)* youth custody centres.

Mr. Mellor: Central records, which are approximate, show for 31 March 1985, the latest date for which information is readily available, about 6,040 persons aged 17 and under 21 in youth custody centres in England and Wales and about 1,150 persons aged 17 and under 21 in detention centres.

Temporary Admissions

52. **Mr. Freeson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers granted temporary admission to the United Kingdom absconded in 1984; and what percentage this is of those so admitted.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply given earlier today to a Question from the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd).

55. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in the last year allowed entry to the United Kingdom as visitors from the Indian subcontinent following representations by an hon. Member have subsequently failed to leave the United Kingdom in accordance with the terms of the temporary entry granted following the representations.

Mr. Waddington: This information is not available.

Police Foot Patrols

53. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in implementing his policy of increasing the number of policemen on foot patrols.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Deployment is the responsibility of chief officers of police. I know that many forces in England and Wales are making significant progress in increasing the number of officers available for foot patrols, for example by employing more civilians to release police officers for operational duties and by reassessing local priorities and re-deploying manpower in accordance with them.

Commercial Television Channels

56. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to allocate additional commercial television channels.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Under international agreement five new channels of television are available for reception by direct broadcasting by satellite in the United Kingdom.

Subject to the satisfactory conclusion of current negotiations between the potential programme makers and the satellite providers, the Government will allocate three channels to the Satellite Broadcasting Board to be set up under Part II of the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984. The timing of the allocation of other channels, including those to be available for allocation by the Independent Broadcasting Authority under the Act, has not been decided.

Police Authorities (Civilian Staff)

57. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civilian staff were employed by police authorities in England and Wales on 31 December in each of the years 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Police civilians are employed by the police authority or county council and the total number in police forces in England and Wales was as follows:

31 December	*Full-time*	*Part-time*
1982	33,898	7,985
1983	34,433	7,673
1984	35,232	7,331

Rape

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Metropolitan police check the names of victims of rape through the central index of prostitutes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No, unless there are exceptional circumstances which suggest that such a check would be appropriate to the investigation of the crime.

Animal Procedures

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to introduce legislation to implement the proposals in the second White Paper on animal procedures in the next Session of Parliament.

Mr. Mellor: It is the Government's intention to legislate as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Murder (Statistics)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* those persons who have been convicted of murder and upon release have murdered again for each of the last 30 years.

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of persons who have been murdered by persons who have been released from prison for murder for each of the last 30 years.

Mr. Mellor: In England and Wales, since 1946, when the present record system was introduced, five persons released on licence from a sentence of life imprisonment for murder were subsequently convicted of further offences of murder while at liberty: in addition one person released on licence from a sentence of imprisonment for murder was subsequently convicted of an offence of murder committed while serving a sentence of imprisonment in Northern Ireland. It is not the practice to publish the names of offenders and victims in the *Official Report*.

Tamils

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many Tamils have sought leave to enter the United Kingdom *(a)* in 1983, *(b)* in 1984 and *(c)* in each month to date, including May in 1985;

(2) what proportion of Tamils seeking leave to enter the United Kingdom in each month of 1985 and for each of 1983 and 1984 are *(a)* males and *(b)* females.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that the relevant statistics are not routinely compiled by ethnic origin. The only information readily available is that in May 1985 about 1,330 Sri Lankan Tamils arrived in the United Kingdom and sought asylum on arrival.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many Tamils have arrived in the United Kingdom seeking asylum since 20 April; how many of these cases have been considered and with what results; and how many of those Tamils originally refused entry have been permitted to remain as a result of further representations;

(2) how many Tamils since 20 May have been removed from the United Kingdom directly to Colombo.

Mr. Waddington: Figures are readily available only for the month of May. During that period some 1,330 Sri Lankan Tamils arrived in the United Kingdom and sought asylum. So far decisions have been taken in respect of about 160, of whom 24 have been granted leave to enter and the remainder have been refused. Representations in respect of some of these are at present under consideration. So far one Tamil has been removed directly to Colombo.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will elaborate on the test for severe hardship for Tamil asylum-seekers as laid down in his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, column *273*.

Mr. Waddington: Each case will be considered in the light of its individual circumstances, but among the considerations to be taken into account are whether the applicant or his immediate family has recently suffered physical injury or serious material loss as a result of the disturbances in Sri Lanka; the area of Sir Lanka from which he comes; and the extent of any political involvement he has had in Sri Lanka.

Immigration Statistics

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many stops are outstanding on non-United Kingdom citizens seeking leave to enter the United Kingdom broken down into *(a)* Tamils only and *(b)* non-Tamils.

Mr. Waddington: On 30 May approximately 1,350 cases were outstanding of persons refused leave to enter whose removal was being deferred pending representations from Members of both Houses. This figure included approximately 60 Sri Lankan citizens of Tamil origin.

Metropolitan Police (Arrests)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of arrests made in the last year by the Metropolitan police during *(a)* new year festivities in Trafalgar square, *(b)* the May day rally and *(c)* the rally in support of the miners in Trafalgar square; and of those arrests what was the number of prosecutions and convictions secured.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the information in connection with the arrests made on each of these occasions is as follows:

Event	*Arrests*	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*
31 December/1 January 1985			
New Years Eve celebrations (Trafalgar Square)	65	14 (51 cautioned)	10 (4 cases outstanding)
24 February 1985			
'Support the Miners' March and Rally (Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square)	121	87 (34 dealt with by caution or immediate release)	62 (16 cases outstanding)
1 May 1985			
May Day Rally (Jubilee Gardens)	None	None	None

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons arrested and charged with drug trafficking offences have absconded before trial *(a)* in England and Wales and *(b)* in each Yorkshire police force area in the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 May 1985, c. *569*]: The following table has been drawn up from records available to me but it is possible that the recording of cases in which the defendant fails to appear is incomplete. Information for earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Persons arrested and charged for drug trafficking offences and granted bail who subsequently failed to appear
England and Wales 1983 *Number of persons*

Police force	*Failed to appear at* Magistrates' Courts*	the Crown Court†
North Yorkshire	1	—
South Yorkshire	2	—
West Yorkshire	3	1
Other police forces	114	26
Total	120	27

* Those granted bail either by the police or by magistrates.
† All persons committed to the Crown Court on bail who failed to appear

whether or not they were originally arrested and charged by the police. No information is available on any granted bail *during* Crown Court proceedings who then fail to appear.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Spending

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1978-79, spending in cash and real terms per pupil in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools, based on (i) figures estimated by local authorities and (ii) figures subsequently reported by local authorities.

Mr. Dunn: The average net expenditure per primary and secondary pupil, in cash and real terms, based on local authorities' returns of their original estimates to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and on their actual expenditure returns to the Department of the Environment are as follows:

England, financial years

	Primary				*Secondary*			
	Estimates		*Actuals*		*Estimates*		*Actuals*	
	Cash (£)	*Real Terms (£)*	*Cash (£)*	*Real Terms (£)*	*Cash (£)*	*Real Terms (£)*	*Cash (£)*	*Real Terms (£)*
1978-79	365	620	370	630	535	910	535	910
1979-80	435	635	430	625	615	895	610	890
1980-81	565	695	545	670	775	955	770	945
1981-82	620	695	620	695	855	955	870	970
1982-83	685	715	680	710	940	985	945	990
1983-84	735	735	735	735	1,010	1,010	1,025	1,025

The cash figures have been repriced to 1983--84 real terms using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator; 1983-84 is the latest year for which actual figures are available.

Polytechnics

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what factors he based his decision to allocate the sum of £2·5 million to polytechnics to enable them to establish bases from which they can build up research contract work and technical partnership and development.

Sir Keith Joseph: My decision, based on advice from the NAB, was that £2·5 million should be allocated from the advanced further education (AFE) pool for 1985-86 for the selective support of science,, engineering and other industrially related research in local authority higher education. The individual institutions were selected by the NAB on the basis of their established strengths in these fields and their potential for the further development of research links with commerce and industry.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what joint strategies have been formulated between his Department and the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education for the financing of scientific research undertaken by polytechnics from now until the end of the 1990s.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government's policy towards research generally in higher education is set out in Cmnd. 9524. In relation to local authority higher education, I have accepted the NAB's proposal that £2·5 million of the AFE pool for 1985-86 should be deployed selectively in support of research, and that this level of support should be at least maintained for two further years. I shall receive NAB's detailed advice on the allocation of funds for 1986-87, including research funds, later this year. In addition, I hope that polytechnics and colleges will make every effort to earn research and consultancy income from private sources. The Government have to this end recently introduced legislation to facilitate such commercial activities.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what factors he based his decision to introduce the system of allocating polytechnic funds according to the number of whole-time-equivalent students.

Sir Keith Joseph: For the financial years 1984-85 and 1985-86, I have accepted the advice of the NAB that the AFE pool should be distributed to polytechnics and colleges on the basis of target student numbers, weighted to reflect the relative cost of providing courses in different modes and subject areas.

This method, which is subject to continuing refinement, is intended to provide equitably for the cost of higher education in each institution according to its particular circumstances and in support of the NAB's plans.

Higher Education

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to implement the recommendations on the promotion of an entrepreneurial role for institutions of higher education contained in the Muir Wood report entitled "Improving Research Links between Higher Education and Industry".

Sir Keith Joseph: Paragraph 5.11 of the Green Paper on the development of higher education into the 1990s (Cmnd. 9524), presented to the House on 21 May 1985, lists the main actions that the Government are taking to help promote an entrepreneurial role for higher education institutions, drawing upon the recommendations of the Muir Wood report.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Hedgerows

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for each year since 1979 the lengths of hedgerows destroyed, and planted on farms with agricultural development grants.

Mrs. Fenner: I regret that the Ministry does not keep records of the length of hedgerow removed or planted, against which capital grant has been paid. However, with few exceptions, grants for hedge removal were discontinued in 1976 and then terminated completely in 1983, since when no further grants for this purpose have been approved.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many Forestry Commission felling licences were granted to private individuals or organisations in England in the year to 31 March; and what was the total area of conifers and broadleaved timber so felled.

Mrs. Fenner: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the area of land newly afforested in England in the year to 31 March; and if he will *(a)* indicate what proportions were planted by the Forestry Commission and private landowners, respectively and *(b)* distinguish between coniferous plantations and other forestry schemes.

Mrs. Fenner: The information is as follows:—

Type of Planting	*Forestry Commission16 (hectares)*	*Private Landowners (hectares)*	*Totals (hectares)*
Conifers	160	542	702
Broadleaves	7	434	441
Totals	167	976	1,143

These figures are provisional. Planting statistics for 1984-85 will be published by the Forestry Commission in its next annual report.

National Food Survey

Mr. Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration has been given since 1979 to developing the national food survey as an instrument of nutritional surveillance in relation to health.

Mrs. Fenner: The national food survey contributes to nutritional surveillance by monitoring trends in the patterns of food consumption of the population as a whole and of particular groups. The national food survey committee, which oversees the methodology and developments of the survey, considers that the results provide valuable information on the diet of groups which may be "at risk". Special investigations have been carried out to supplement the survey results and to monitor more closely the nutritional adequacy of the diet of such groups. This approach is considered to be more appropriate and cost effective than further widening of the scope of the national food survey.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Namibia

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will review the policy of not accepting the 1971 International Court of Justice advisory opinion on Namibia.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) on 22 May at column 459.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further approach to the South African authorities to seek the release of Namibian political prisoners and detainees.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the honourable Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) on 15 May at column 136.

South Africa

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will invite the president of the African National Congress of South Africa to Britain to disuss recent developments in South Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: No. While the African National Congress remains committed to the violent overthrow of a Government with whom we maintain diplomatic relations, such an invitation would not be appropriate.

European Foundation

Mr. Normanton asked the Secretary of State for and Commonwealth Affairs what progess is being made with the establishment of the European Foundation and the recruitment of its staff; and when it will be fully operative.

Mr. Renten: Six of our European Community partners have followed our lead in ratifying the agreement establishing the European Foundation. The foundation will become operative one month after the last ratification is deposited, probably later this year. The executive committee will then be able to recruit staff.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total complement, by grade, of all United Kingdom and locally recruited staff at Her Majesty's high commission in Colombo.

Mr. Renton: The present complement of diplomatic service-funded United Kingdom-based and locally recruited staff at the United Kingdom high commission in Colombo is as follows:

United Kingdom-based
High commissioner
One counsellor
One first secretary
Three second secretaries
Two attachés
In addition there are five administrative and technical support staff.

Locally engaged
There are two senior locally engaged staff. One is a commercial officer of equivalent rank to a higher executive officer and the other, who is employed in the administration section, has a rank equivalent to executive officer. There are eighteen staff

employed on duties similar to that of clerical officers and secretaries. Forty other local staff are employed in an administrative capacity.

As a consequence of the introduction of a visa requirement for Sri Lankan nationals, we have agreed to reinforce the complement in the following manner:

(i) Two attachés, who arrived the weekend of 1 June, on temporary attachment for four months.
(ii) One attaché on temporary attachment for three months arriving on 7 June.
(iii) The addition of two attachés on a full-time basis from mid-July.
(iv) The recruitment of two locally engaged staff at clerical officer level on a permanent basis.
(v) One attaché presently absent from post is returning early from leave on 10 June. The temporary officer sent to Colombo to cover his leave will remain there until 23 June to provide further assistance.

There are in addition staff attached to the high commission in Colombo whose costs are met by other Government Departments.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many cases by month for the past two years the entry clearance officers in Colombo have dealt with.

Mr. Renton: Details are shown in the following table:

	Entry clearances issued United Kingdom	*Entry clearances issued Hong Kong*	*Entry Clearances refused United Kingdom*
1983			
January	171	9	7
February	183	17	7
March	340	16	20
April	173	19	14
May	376	6	13
June	356	18	16
July	216	21	8
August	250	10	6
September	272	23	14
October	212	52	18
November	171	15	33
December	192	15	33
1984			
January	121	34	27
February	207	23	17
March	216	17	30
April	331	21	23
May	348	8	35
June	453	13	44
July	556	25	34
August	567	30	20
September	345	15	18
October	169	18	16
November	179	20	29
December	175	19	18
1985			
January	189	26	30
February	173	22	13
March	270	43	12

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what journeys have been made by United Kingdom diplomatic staff in Colombo to different parts of Sri Lanka to examine the problem of communal dissent.

Mr. Renton: The British high commissioner at Colombo and his United Kingdom-based staff travel frequently outside Colombo. This year they have visited Mannar in the north-west of the island, Trincomalee in the north-east, Polonnaruwa and the central highlands, and Batticaloa in the south-east. These visits have included contacts with representatives of all communities, including for example the citizens' committees of Mannar and Batticaloa.

Nicaragua

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will take steps to clarify what funds will be used by the Common Market Commission to pay for the 300,000 tons of bananas which the Commission agreed to import from Nicaragua and for the provision of £4,200,000 of aid for that republic;

(2) if Her Majesty's Government were consulted by the Common Market Commission prior to the agreement made between the Commission and the Republic of Nicaragua in the current month for the importing of 300,000 metric tonnes of bananas each month from Nicaragua and for the provision of £4,200,000 of Common Market aid for the Republic; and what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the Commission's action.

Mr. Rifkind: The Commission has not entered into any agreement to import bananas from Nicaragua. Any Nicaraguan bananas which enter the European Community market are bought by Community importers on the world market and attract normal customs duties. Nicaragua receives both food aid and project aid from regular European Community programmes. The Community's 1985 food aid programme is expected to provide food aid worth approximately £4,200,000 to Nicaragua under title 9 of the Community budget.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government were consulted by the President of the Commission, before he advised the Vice-President of Nicaragua that the economic sanctions applied by the United States against Nicaragua on 1 May conflicted with the economic and monetary philosophy of the Common Market and were considered by the Common Market to be unlawful; and what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards this statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The talks between the President of the Commission and the Vice-President of Nicaragua were private, and held without consultation. In recent General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade discussion of the United States embargo of Nicaragua, however, the Commission made clear the European Community view, to which the United Kingdom is party, that article XXI of the general agreement on tariffs and trade entitles each contracting party to determine what action is necessary to uphold its national security.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there have been any discussions in any meeting of Common Market Ministers about their attitude and policy towards the economic sanctions imposed by the United States against Nicaragua on 1 May; and if any decisions have been made by the Council of Ministers on this subject.

Mr. Rifkind: There have been no ministerial discussions or decisions on this matter.

Central America

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals have been made by the EEC to further relations with central America; and if he will place a copy of the proposals in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The Commission has in the last fortnight produced a paper on the European Community's relations with central America which contains a proposal for a European Community/central America co-operation agreement and outlines a possible European Community negotiating position. We are still studying the proposal. In line with normal practice in relation to Commission proposals for negotiating mandates with third countries the document must remain confidential as its publication could prejudice the Community's negotiating position.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual cost of constant attendance allowances for the three most recent years for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 18 March at column *380*.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans for extending the opportunity of payment by credit transfer to recipients of attendance allowance.

Mr. Whitney: When attendance allowance is paid with retirement pension or widow's benefit payments direct into a bank or building society account by credit transfer are already available. From June, all new claimants for attendance allowance will be able to choose to have their benefit paid by credit transfer. During the 20 weeks from the end of June 1985 we shall write to existing beneficiaries paid by the attendance allowance unit at Blackpool to explain that the credit transfer method of payment is now available to them and to ask whether they wish to change to it. Those who do not wish to switch need do nothing; their present payment arrangements will continue unchanged.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual cost of mobility allowance for the three most recent years for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: The information is contained in the Government's Public Expenditure White Paper, "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1985-86 to 1987-88" Cmnd. 9428, Vol. II, page 166, Table 3.12.

Fraud

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will produce a table giving a breakdown of reasons for fraud investigation interviews and the percentage of interviews in each category which eventually resulted in the claimant being found to have committed fraud duringin each year since 1978;

(2) how many claimants were interviewed for suspected fraud; and what percentage of these were subsequently found to have committed fraud each year from 1978.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many fraud officers are employed in his Department; and what this is as a percentage of the total establishment.

Mr. Whitney: Two thousand, six hundred and thirty-one staff were allocated for fraud work in the year ending March 1985 in local and regional offices of the social security organisation of this Department. This represents 4·35 per cent. of the total establishment for these offices.

Clinical Assistants

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set up a departmental investigation into the effects of the employment of multi-sessional clinical assistants upon the prospects and promotion of junior hospital staff.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We see no present need for a special inquiry to supplement our regular collection of statistics and contact with the National Health Service.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many multi-sessional clinical assistant posts in each of the health regions in England and Wales are at present taken up on a part-time basis by general practitioners; and what percentage of such posts this represents.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The figures requested are shown in the table.

Clinical Assistants at 30 September 1984*

	Number also holding GP Appointments†	*GP's as a percentage of all Clinical Assistants*
England and Wales	2,344	54·8
Northern	163	68·5
Yorkshire	205	59·8
Trent	205	69·5
East Anglian	99	66·4
North West Thames	89	35·2
North East Thames	111	38·9
South East Thames	149	49·5
South West Thames	92	37·7
Wessex	173	59·5
Oxford	91	52·0
South Western	199	47·8
West Midlands	278	63·5
Mersey	90	60·0
North Western	216	65·1
London Postgraduate Teaching Hospitals	8	8·2
Wales	176	65·7

* Excluding those working one session or less.
† Provisional

Mrs. Savage

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the continuing suspension of Mrs. Savage, a consultant

obstetrician at the London hospital, Mile End road, London; and what representations he has received concerning her suspension.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This is a matter for the health authority, which has taken the decision. To date, we have received three letters, two of them copies of letters addressed to others.

Tinnitus

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) which health districts in England have stopped providing tinnitus masking devices to National Health Service patients; and how many patients have been affected;

(2) what is the average cost of providing masking devices for the treatment of tinnitus; and whether his Department issues guidelines or criteria to be satisfied before National Health Service provision can be entertained;

(3) how many tinnitus masking devices have been made available to National Health Service patients in each of the health regions of England.

Mr. John Patten: The provision of a masking device as a form of treatment for a particular patient suffering from tinnitus would be a matter for the clinical judgment of the consultant concerned. However this is a relatively new form of treatment, still subject to research. I am advised there is not yet general agreement about the extent of its effectiveness compared to other forms of treatment for particular types of patient. Central guidance at this stage of development would be premature therefore. A multicentre field trial, funded by the Department, is now being evaluated. We have no central information on how many maskers are being provided, their cost or the districts concerned.

Rural Family Practitioners

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider introducing increased inducement payments for family medical practitioners in rural areas where there is *(a)* great sparsity of population, *(b)* excessive remoteness and isolation from hospital facilities and other practices predominate, *(c)* the setting up of satellite surgeries on a fixed or mobile basis would be beneficial, *(d)* substantial inter-house call distances are the normal practice and *(e)* locums are difficult to attract and acquire.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Rural practice payments are available to compensate doctors for the additional time and expense involved in practice in rural areas. Inducement payments are available for a doctor practising in an area where we have accepted that it is essential to maintain a medical practice though the area is sparsely populated and is for some other reason unattractive to a doctor. There is no fixed inducement payment but eligibility for payment and the amount paid are determined on the merits of the individual case. Doctors who wish to invest in new purpose built branch surgeries may already qualify for substantial help under the cost rent scheme which in most cases will cover the interest on the capital borrowed for the project and provide a return on the capital invested.

Departmental Records

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services what documents and other physical material have been obtained by staff of his Department in the last year through liaison with the police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to social security benefit fraud investigations. While there will be occasions when staff liaise with the police, this is not a general feature of the investigation of benefit fraud; the information requested is not, therefore, held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether instructions issued to staff of his Department provide for written records to be kept of *(a)* contact with the police, *(b)* information sought from the police and *(c)* information supplied through liaison with the police; and if he will identify the official forms used for such purposes.

Mr. Whitney: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to social security benefit fraud investigations. Although there are no specific instructions about the keeping of records of contact with the police, general instructions have been issued to staff that all material information should be recorded, dated and signed. This information is recorded in the form of a brief memorandum.

Limited List Prescribing

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the relationship between the availability on prescription of benzodiazepine tranquillisers and the problems of drug addiction; and whether the introduction of limited list prescribing has contributed towards alleviating this situation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Patients can become dependent upon benzodiazepines if they are prescribed over a prolonged period. The guidelines of good clinical practice in the treatment of drug misuse which the Chief Medical Officer issued to all doctors last year contain guidance on the management of withdrawal from dependence on benzodiazepines. It is too early to be certain that the selected list has had a significant lasting effect on prescribing of these drugs.

Infection Control

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last reviewed the advice given by his Department to health authorities on infection control; and whether the last review led to any further inquiries or studies being made or any changes in procedure.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We issue a wide range of advice on specific areas concerned with infection control. This is generally subject to continuous review and updating. Our advice on the management of infection control in hospitals and the management of specific outbreaks, is somewhat dated and steps are in hand to revise it.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many infection control nurses are currently

employed in the National Health Service; how many health districts have none; and how many employ more than one.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have this information centrally.

Hospital-Acquired Infection

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what ways advice is given by his Departmental officers to health authorities about cleansing, disinfection and sterilisation; and on how many occasions his officials have advised private cleaning companies, awarded contracts in National Health Service hospitals, about methods of preventing hospital infection.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We issue guidance on these matters in circulars and other publications, contribute to training courses and seminars and reply to specific inquiries.

Private cleaning companies do seek advice from time to time but we do not record the number of occasions. We advise them to consult the health authority's control of infection officers concerning local policies and procedures.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what ways his Department monitors outbreaks of hospital-acquired infection; and how many outbreaks have been reported to his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect centrally regular information on outbreaks of hospital infection. There are, however, statutory requirements for reporting notifiable diseases, whether or not they arise in hospitals.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost to the National Health Service of hospital-acquired infection.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have not attempted to estimate the cost of hospital-acquired infection.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his current estimate of the percentage of hospital patients who suffer an infection acquired while they are in hospital; and on what evidence his estimate is based.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The 1981 public health laboratory service prevalence study of hospital acquired infection indicated that some 19·1 per cent. of patients surveyed in hospital were infected. About half of these infections had been acquired before entry to hospital. The definition of infection used in this study included minor as well as serious conditions. By no means all of the infections identified would have been preventable.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will request health authorities to submit an annual report on the incidence of hospital-acquired infections in their area and to identify separately cases of Legionnaire's disease.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. We do, however, expect most serious outbreaks of infection, wherever they occur, to be reported to the public health laboratory service.

As I explained in my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 20 May at columns *317-8* arrangements have been made for the communicable diseases surveillance centre to inform us of all confirmed cases of legionnaire's disease.

Children (Benefits)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he can give the latest estimate of the number of children in families in receipt of *(a)* family income supplement, *(b)* supplementary benefit and *(c)* housing benefit.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the numbers claiming supplementary benefit, divided into the normal categories, at the latest date for which information is available and, if so available, the numbers of dependants.

Mr. Whitney: Provisional information for December 1983 is as follows:

	Claimants (thousands)	*Dependants (including partners) (thousands)*
1. All supplementary benefits	4,348	2,888
2. All pensions	1,648	275
(a) Retirement pensioners and NI widows aged 60 and over	1,563	267
(b) Others	85	8
3. All allowances	2,700	2,614
(a) Unemployed, *with* contributory benefit	205	351
(b) Unemployed, *without* contributory benefit	1,621	1,275
(c) Sick and Disabled, *with* contributory benefit	79	73
(d) Sick and Disabled, *without* contributory benefit	163	36
(e) NI widows under 60	15	5
(f) One parent families not included in other groups	449	763
(g) Others	167	110

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioners receive (a) the higher rate of heating addition, (b) the higher rate of dietary addition and (c) single payments.

Mr. Whitney: The latest available figures are as follows:

	Year ending April 1985 Number
Pensioners in receipt of higher rate of heating addition	336,000
Pensioners in receipt of higher rate of dietary addition	143,000
Number of single payments made to pensioners	341,000 *

* Provisional; December 1983

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 16 April, *Official*

Report, column *160*, when he intends to lay regulations amending the supplementary benefit rules so as to allow payment to strikers for funeral expenses.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 May 1985, c. *587*]: I regret that my earlier reply was incorrect. We expect to make the necessary amendment to the Supplementary Benefit (Trade Disputes and Recovery from Earnings) Regulations 1980 within the next few weeks. At the same time we shall take the opportunity to amend the Supplementary Benefit (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1981 to provide for the backdating of claims to supplementary benefit to be related to entitlement to statutory sick pay, in accordance with the undertaking given at Committee stage of the Social Security Bill. — [*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 17 January 1985, c. 231.]

Board and Lodging Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice has been given to adjudication officers on how to determine whether someone aged under 26 years claiming a board and lodging allowance is so disabled that it is unreasonable to expect him to be in accommodation other than as a boarder; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I am advised that the Chief Adjudication Officer is considering what specific guidance should be issued on this and on other matters relating to the recent changes in supplementary benefit for boarders.

School Health Statistics

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if any changes have been made in the collection of school health statistics since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Collection of form 20m "School and Child Guidance Clinics" and part of Form 8m (i) "School Health Service" was discontinued in 1981. These covered the following items of information:—

FORM 20m

School clinics:

Number of premises at end of year.

Number at which various types of treatment or examination were provided.

Child guidance clinics:

Number of premises at end of year.

Number of clinic sessions held during the year.

Number of children newly referred in the year.

FORM 8m (i) (PART)

Hygiene inspections

Number of pupils in respect of whom cleansing notices were issued under Section 54 (2) and 54 (3) of the Education Act 1944.

The steering group on health services' information examined school health statistics as part of its review of infomation about services provided by the National Health Service for and in the community. Its recommendations on the subject were published in 1984 in the group's fifth report. The detailed work necessary for the implementation of these recommendations is now under way. It has been agreed with the National Health Service that national collection of new statistics in the fields covered by the fifth report should start in 1988.

Child Accident Statistics

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if any changes have been made in the collection of child accident statistics since 1979; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much money the Health Education Council has spent on child accident prevention campaigns each year since 1979 in constant terms.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Health (Social Inequalities)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what research into the effect of social inequalities in health has been funded by his Department since August 1980;

(2) what studies of the interactions of factors affecting health have been financed by his Department since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: Much of the research funded by the Department will concern itself with any factors of interaction influencing health including the effects of social inequalities. Some representative examples of this are:

Research Body	*Name of subject of research*	*Total Cost (£000)*	*Completion date*
Department of Community Medicine, St. Thomas's Hospital Medical School	National Study of Health and Growth	717·1	31 December 1986
General Practice Research Unit, University of Birmingham	Morbidity Statistics for General Practice—3rd Study	Included in Unit's general funding	31 December 1985
Bristol University	Child Health and Education Study	449·9	31 March 1985
National Children's Bureau	National Child Development Study 4th Sweep	662·6	31 December 1984

For comprehensive details of the health and personal social services research funded by the Department I would refer the hon. Member to the DHSS handbook of research and development which is published annually. Copies are in the Library.

RAWP Formulae

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what indications of health and social need for inclusion in the resource allocation working party formulae have been developed since 1979;

(2) if he will list the criteria used in the resource allocation working party formulae and the changes made since 1979;

(3) if he will make a statement on the effects on resources allocated to each region of those changes made to the resource allocation working party formulae since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The criteria used in the resource allocation working party formula are set out in the report of the resource allocation working party 1976, "Sharing resources for health in England", and the follow up report of the advisory group on resource allocation 1980. Copies of both are available in the Library.

The main change since 1979 in the revenue formula at national level has been our decision, with health service support, to base calculations of regions' target shares of resources on population projections for the year of allocation rather than, as before, on population estimates which relate to the position two years earlier. This change, introduced for the 1985-86 allocations, makes the formula more sensitive to the needs of regions with a rapidly growing or declining population.

For capital RAWP, the main change — again with health service support—has been the phasing out of an element in the formula reflecting inherited inequalities in the capital stock. This element had proved difficult to quantify accurately, and since 1984-85, capital targets have been calculated with reference to weighted population only.

There have been a number of other minor and technical changes.

It is for regions to decide how best to apply the RAWP principles in distributing resources to districts. Regions have developed their own approaches, and some are known to have introduced measures of social deprivation to reflect local circumstances. The hon. Member may like to approach individual regions for further information.

The RAWP formula is used to calculate a region's "target", or fair share of the resources available nationally. Changes in the formula therfore have an impact on a Region's target and hence on its distance from target. The rate of progress towards target has however always been a matter for Ministers' judgment. In addition to the RAWP calculation, we take account of the pace at which "RAWP — gaining" regions can prepare to make good use of additional resources, and the extent to which above target regions can adjust their plans to more modest resource allocations without serious disruption to services. It is not therefore possible to identify separately the impact of changes in the RAWP formula on regions' allocations.

Community Health

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of spending by health authorities was devoted to community health in 1979 and each succeeding year.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The annual financial accounts of health authorities in England show the proportion of spending (excluding expenditure on family practitioner services) devoted to community health services as:

	Per cent
1979-80	8·3
1980-81	8·5
1981-82	8·5
1982-83	8·6
1983-84	8·7

Clinics (Access and Facilities)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice his Department has issued to health authorities since 1979 on improving the accessibility to and facilities of antenatal and health clinics.

Mr. John Patten: Advice on improving access to and provision of health service facilities for antenatal care is contained in the Government's reply (Cmnd. 8084) to the Social Services Committee's Second Report, Session 1979-80, and in the First Report of the Maternity Services Advisory Committee. The former was referred to health authorities under cover of circular HC(80)13, the latter under cover of the "Dear Administrator" letter DA(84)4.

School Health Service

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the sum spent on the school health service in 1979 and in each year since at constant prices.

Mr. John Patten: Expenditure on the school health service shown in the costing returns submitted by health authorities to the Department, revalued to 1983-84 prices, was as follows:

	£'000
1979-80	120,674
1980-81	123,047
1981-82	123,823
1982-83	135,197
1983-84	137,170

Schools (Health Education)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice his Department has given to health authorities about their contribution to health education in schools since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: "Care in Action", the Department's handbook on policies and priorities for the personal social services in England published in 1981, advised health authorities, as part of their local strategy of health promotion and preventive medicine, to support health education programmes in schools on key topics including smoking, alcohol use, mental health, the care of elderly people, nutrition, exercise and preparation for parenthood. This continues to be our policy.

Smoking

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research has been sponsored by his Department since 1979 into devising methods of helping people reduce or end cigarette smoking.

Mr. John Patten: A number of studies have been commissioned. One currently in progress at the Maudsley hospital is testing the effectiveness of different treatment methods with a view to developing a new type of smokers' clinic that could function as a local centre to help reduce smoking. A major study carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys into smokers' attitudes and behaviour was published in 1983 and the results applied to health education campaigns to persuade smokers to stop. In addition, the Government-funded

Health Education Council last year published research into the role of specialist treatment services in helping people stop smoking.

Drugs and Alcohol (Health Campaigns)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money the Health Education Council has spent on campaigns against hard drugs and alcohol problems, respectively, in each year since 1979; and what is their planned expenditure in the current year in real terms.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the adult female population is currently screened for cervical and breast cancer, respectively.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have information on cervical screening in the form requested. We collect only statistics of smear tests and these do not equate with the number of women screened.

We do not collect statistics on breast cancer screening since there is no national programme. We are in the process of establishing an expert group to advise on the policy we should adopt.

Severe Hypertension

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the adult population is screened for severe hypertension.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available centrally. Arrangements for identifying patients with high blood pressure are the responsibility of individual doctors.

Child Benefit

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of average gross male industrial earnings child benefit has represented in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Whitney: The information is as follows:

Child benefit as a percentage of average gross male manual earnings

	Column 1	*Column 2*
April 1978	3·6	—
April 1979	4·3	—
November 1980	4·0	—
November 1981	4·1	—
November 1982	4·2	—
November 1983	4·3	4·4
November 1984	—	4·3

Notes:

1. The percentage figure for 1978 uses as its basis the level of child support in which has been included the value of an income tax allowance for a child under age 12.

2. In calculating the percentage figures, earnings have been derived from Department of Employment's "New Earnings Survey".

3. A revised method of presenting average gross male manual workers' earnings was introduced in 1983. Column 1 is based on earnings of male workers in full-time employment aged 21 and over whose earnings were unaffected by absence. Column 2 is based on earnings of all male workers in full-time employment whose earnings were unaffected by absence.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards the extent of uprating of child benefit in real terms in 1985 and subsequent years.

Mr. Newton: It has been the practice to take decisions about the rate of child benefit having regard to the resources available and other social security priorities. This practice will continue.

Health (Social Inequalities)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the actions taken by his Department since 1979 to reduce social inequalities affecting health.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Primary Health Care (London)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those recommendations of the Acheson report on primary health care in London which have been implemented by his Department, giving in each case the initial and annually recurring costs at constant prices.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Acheson report on primary health care in inner London had national implications because many of the problems it identified arose to a greater or lesser extent in other major cities. It was therefore commended to all health authorities, local authorities and family practitioner committees which covered inner city areas as a basis for local action within the resources available. But in addition, as my right hon. Friend announced on 27 October 1983, we responded to the recommendations by making available a sum of £9 million to improve primary health care in inner cities. Expenditure will be spread over the period 1983-84 to 1986-87. Expenditure incurred to date and planned for 1985-86 is as follows:

	£ million (current year prices)		
	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Training of extra Health Visitors and District Nurses	0·703	0·540	0·104
Health authority projects to improve primary health care within their inner city areas	1·201	1·210	0·885
Improvements to GP premises and incentives to group practice	0·025	0·725	0·600
Specially commissioned projects from the King's Fund and other agencies (e.g. to foster collaboration between DHAs and FPCs, support for Academic Departments of General Practice, guidance for GPs in improving practice premises etc.)	0·010	0·077	0·405
Totals	1·939	2·552	2·994

Total spent or committed to 1985-86 = £7·485 million.

Family Practitioner Committees (Computers)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which Greater London family practitioner committees have computerised their registration functions and which have firm plans to do so within 1985-86.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Croydon family practitioner committee has computerised its full registration system. Barking and Havering family practitioner committee has computerised its register of females and will complete the male register within 1985-86. Plans are well advanced and resources are available for the installation of full registration systems in Barnet, Brent and Harrow, Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow, Enfield and Haringey and Hillingdon family practitioner committees in this financial year.

We are waiting to hear of further plans for computerisation which should arise out of the recent initiative on cervical cytology.

Pensioners (Cumbernauld)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioners in Cumbernauld new town are in receipt of long-term supplementary benefit.

Mr. Whitney: Cumbernauld new town is covered for supplementary benefit purposes by one DHSS office but its boundaries are not conterminous. All pensioners in receipt of supplementary benefit receive the long-term scale rate. On 7 May 1985, 2,731 pensioners were receiving supplementary benefit from that office.

Supplementary Benefit (Requirement Allowances)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average percentage proportion of *(a)* total incomes and *(b)* his Department's benefits, of additional requirement allowances paid to supplementary benefit recipients.

Mr. Whitney: It is regretted that all the information is not available in the form that it is requested. Provisional estimates for December 1983 suggest that the overall proportion of total income (excluding housing benefit) was 4·7 per cent. and the overall proportion of supplementary benefit was 9·5 per cent.

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry.

Undernourishment

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are undernourished in England.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Benefits (Newham)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the number of recipients, and the total amounts of *(a)* death grant, *(b)* maternity allowance, *(c)* special diet supplement and *(d)* special laundry supplement claimed in the London borough of Newham for each of the past five years.

Mr. Whitney: The London borough of Newham is served by three of the Department's local offices: Canning Town, Plaistow and Woodgrange Park. Figures are not available to show either the number of recipients of death grant, maternity allowance, and additional requirements in supplementary benefit cases for diet and laundry or the total amounts paid.

However, the number of claims for death grant and maternity allowance in the four years ending 9 April 1985 were as follows (figures for 1980-81 are not available):

Death Grant	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Canning Town	260	408	317	271
Plaistow	795	995	874	718
Woodgrange Park	922	1,197	1,162	871
Totals	1,977	2,600	2,353	1,860
Maternity Allowance	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Canning Town	509	527	550	249
Plaistow	1,207	1,233	1,310	770
Woodgrange Park	1,669	1,773	2,014	1,029
Totals	3,385	3,533	3,874	2,048

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was spent on unemployment benefit and other benefits to unemployed people in Newham for each of the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Meals on Wheels (Newham)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people over the age of 60 years have been in receipt of meals on wheels in the London borough of Newham for each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available centrally in the form requested. The total numbers of meals provided at home by the London borough of Newham for each of the last five years are as follows:

Years ended 31 March	*Number*
1980	163,752
1981	153,018
1982	142,145
1983	145,415
1984 (Provisional)	170,650

Pensioners (Newham)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the current number of men and women residing in the London borough of Newham who are in receipt of state retirement pensions.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 22 May at column *470*.

Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the increase in revenue expenditure in real terms between 1978-79 and 1984-85 in each of the regional health authorities in England.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The following table shows the percentage increase in regional health authorities' revenue expenditure between 1978-79 and 1984-85, after taking account of general inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator.

Region	Percentage* Real Increase in Revenue Expenditure 1978-79 to 1984-85 per cent
Northern	18·6
Yorkshire	17·9
Trent	19·9
East Anglian	20·9
4 Thames Regions and Boards of Governors/SHAs	†10·7
Wessex	21·0
Oxford	15·7
South Western	17·5
West Midlands	18·1
Mersey	13·6
North Western	19·2

Notes

* Percentages are based on actual revenue expenditure from health authorities' summarised accounts for 1978-79; and on provisional outturn figures for 1984-85.

† Figures for the individual Thames regions are distorted by 1982 boundary changes.

Social Security Review

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many supplementary pensioners with heating additions and other additional requirements he estimates will be worse off if the proposals of his Green Paper take full effect and after transitional arrangements are ended;

(2) what he estimates to be the average and highest loss of income for unemployed persons aged under 25 years if the proposals of his Green Paper are finally implemented and once transitional arrangements are ended;

(3) how many households will lose housing benefit under the proposals of his Green Paper; and if he will estimate how many pensioners will lose;

(4) how many households on housing benefit will receive less help with their rent and rates under the proposals of his Green Paper; and if he will estimate how many pensioners will receive less help;

(5) how many households now on family income supplement will not be entitled to family credit under the proposals of his Green Paper.

Mr. Newton: The Green Paper seeks comments on the proposed new structure of social security. Until that is settled it would be misleading to attempt to provide a detailed analysis of the impact of the changes. That must await decisions about the benefit rates to be adopted in April 1987.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what he estimates will be the budget for the new social fund if his proposal in the Green Paper is finally implemented.

Mr. Newton: The size of the budget for the new social fund will be for consideration nearer the time.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what he estimates to be the savings in the first full year of the housing benefit scheme proposed in the Green Paper on reform of social security;

(2) how much he estimates will be saved by his proposal that benefit claimants pay 20 per cent. of their rates bill.

Mr. Newton: Until benefit rates for April 1987 have been settled it is not possible to give precise figures. But expenditure on housing benefit is expected to fall eventually by about £500 million.

Benefit Claimants (Water Rates)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many benefit claimants have water rate bills that are higher than the national average; and for how many the additional amount is greater than *(a)* 50p, *(b)* £1 a week and *(c)* £2 a week.

Mr. Whitney: The information is not available in the precise form requested. Information on the number of claimants who receive an allowance for water rates in their supplementary benefit assessment and the average amounts payable is contained in columns 1 and 2 of table 6.14 of the "Annual Statistical Enquiry 1982," a copy of which is in the Library. The table excludes cases where the allowance for water rates is paid through the housing benefit scheme. Comparable information is not available for these cases.

Social Workers

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the number of social workers in each of the last 10 years; and what has been the percentage change in numbers each year.

Mr. John Patten: The table gives information from 1975 to 1983, the latest year for which figures are available. Prior to 1975 figures were collected on a different basis and are not comparable with those shown.

Social Work staff employed by Social Services Departments England 1975-1983*

As at 30 September	Number† of Social Work staff in post	Annual percentage change in numbers
1975	20,400·4	—
1976	21,181·8	+3·8
1977	21,533·3	+1·7
1978	22,163·0	+2·9
1979	22,733·6	+2·6
1980	22,991·4	+1·1
1981	22,950·7	−0·2
1982	22,989·7	+0·2
1983	23,713·6	+3·1

* Includes senior social workers, social workers, community workers, trainee social workers and social work (welfare) assistants.

† Expressed in whole-time equivalents.

Medical Research Council

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the level of financing to the Medical Research Council in each of the last five years for which information is available.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have been asked to reply.

The Medical Research Council's allocation from the science budget in each of the last five years has been as follows:

	£m
1981-82	101·5
1982-83	107·5
1983-84	113·7
1984-85	117·2
1985-86 (estimated)	122·3

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services what Medical Research Council research projects have been either abandoned or severely restricted as the result of financial restraints in each of the past three years; and if he will indicate the locations of such affected projects.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have been asked to reply.

I understand from the Medical Research Council that, over the past three years, the number of high quality university research grant applications approved by the council but not funded as a result of financial restraints was as follows:

Academic year	*Long-term support applications (normally five years or more)*	*Short-term support applications (normally three years)*
1981-82	nil	66
1982-83	2	25
1983-84	22	199

In addition, many grants were awarded only after severe pruning. No details are available concerning the projects and locations involved.

Reductions in capital and consumable equipment budgets of MRC's institutes in 1983-84 and 1984-85 resulted in some restriction on their work. I understand also that the rate of progress of some major initiatives has been less than the council would have wished.

Chorionic Villus Sampling

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services if he will detail the plans by the Medical Research Council to investigate the safety and accuracy of chorionic villus sampling compared with amniocenteses; and what are the criteria recommended by his Department of women carrying a foetus with more than the average risk of being handicapped or of passing on certain inherited diseases.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have been asked to reply.

In the light of the recommendations of a Medical Research Council working party set up to evaluate the safety of chorion villus sampling (CVS), the council announced on 14 May that it proposes to carry out a randomised clinical trial in order to compare CVS with amniocentesis as a method for the pre-natal diagnosis of a range of genetic diseases. The trial will mainly involve mothers who are at risk of major chromosomal abnormalities, such as that which causes Down's syndrome, but will also include patients at risk of having a baby with a single gene disorder. It is hoped that at least 2,000 women will participate; and that a number of European centres may agree to participate in addition to between 10 and 20 centres in the United Kingdom. The decision whether to offer any pre-natal screening is one of clinical judgment by the clinician responsible for the care of the mother. I understand that great care will be taken to ensure that prospective participants understand the nature of the trial before deciding to take part.

Legionnaire's Disease

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services if the Medical Research Council is at present involved in studying the modes of transmission and the development of a vaccine for Legionnaire's disease; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 4 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) at columns 128-29 concerning research into the origin, spread and treatment of this disease. I understand that the council has recently awarded a further grant for the continuation of work on disease processes, mechanisms of immunity and approaches to therapy in experimental Legionella pneumophilia infections. These studies will include attempts, to immunise against infections. None of the projects supported by the MRC directly involves the study of transmission; however, I understand that it is a widely held belief that the disease is spread by means of fine water droplets.

I also understand that the public health laboratory service, which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, is studying the modes of transmission of Legionnaire's disease. In addition, in 1981 my right hon. Friend commissioned an extensive environmental study on Legionnaire's disease which is being undertaken by the communicable disease surveillance centre at Colindale. The main objective of this research is to determine how frequently the bacterium may be found in water systems and to identify the design features and other factors which permit its growth and establishment.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list each case or outbreak of suspected or confirmed Legionnaire's disease notified to his Department since 1 April 1985, giving in each case the date the Department was notified, the number of persons affected and the number of deaths.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 May 1985, c. *118*]: I regret that a figure provided for Birmingham was incorrect and the entry should have read:

	Date notified	*Number of cases*	*Deaths*
Birmingham	9 May 1985	1	0

I am glad to say that the patient has recovered in this isolated case in Birmingham and I apologise for the fact that a misunderstanding led to our publishing reports of his death.

Pensions

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his estimates of the numbers of people expected to receive additional component under the state earnings-related pension scheme in the tax years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; what is the maximum estimated additional component; and what is the estimated average additional component in those years.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 May 1985, c. *339-40*.]: The information is as follows:

Retirement Pensioners expected to receive an earnings-related pension under SERPS

	Number
1985-86	1,350,000
1986-87	1,550,000
1987-88	1,750,000

Estimated weekly amounts of net additional component*

	Maximum	Average
1985-86	£19·50	£1·85
1986-87	£23·77	£2·50
1987-88	£28·55	£2·65

* After deduction of any guaranteed minimum pension(s) from contracted-out occupational pension scheme(s).

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate *(a)* the average amount of earnings-related supplement per week received by eligible pensioners and *(b)* the lowest and highest amount received per week by eligible pensioners in 1985-86.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to to his reply*, 7 May 1985, c. *339*.]: The following are the estimated figures for 1985-86:

Weekly net additional component for retirement pensioners receiving a State earnings related pension.*

	£
average amount	1·85
minimum amount	0·01
maximum amount	19·50

* after deductions of any guaranteed minimum pension(s) from contracted-out occupational pension scheme(s).

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide his latest estimate of the number of retirement pensioners in receipt of the state earnings related pension in 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 May 1985, c. *339*.]: The figures requested are as follows:

Retirement pensioners receiving a pension under the state earnings related pension scheme

	Number
1985-86	1,350,000
1986-87	1,550,000

NORTHERN IRELAND

Licences

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* all the different types of licences operated or granted by his Department and the year in which they first came into operation.

Mr. Hurd: Information about different types of licences currently operated or granted directly by the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments is as follows:

Types of licences currently operated or granted	*Year of first coming into operation*
Mixed explosives—storage	1875
Gunpowder or mixed explosives—registered premises	1875
Certificate of exemption—overnight storage of explosives	1974
Various controlled substances:	
(i) Ammonium Nitrate and certain mixtures containing Ammonium Nitrate	1972
(ii) Sodium Chlorate and certain mixtures containing Sodium Chlorate	1972
(iii) Nitro Benzene	1972
(iv) Sodium Chlorite and certain mixtures containing Sodium Chlorite	1973
(v) Potassium Nitrate and certain mixtures containing Potassium Nitrate	1974
(vi) Sodium Nitrate and certain mixtures containing Sodium Nitrate	1974
(vii) Sodium Nitrate and certain mixtures containing Sodium Nitrite	1976
Purchase or use of fireworks	1970
Authorisation to act as shot firer	1977
Certificate of Authorisation granted to operate a firearms club	1819
Certificate of Approval in respect of premises for use as Training Schools	1868
Animal Health—Licences to prevent introduction and spread of disease	1981
Plant Health—	
Potato Root Eelworm—control of	1968
Wart Disease—control of	1973
Phytosanitary Certificates for export of plants and plant products	1981
Exemptions from prohibitions of plant health legislation	1981
Permits allowing movement of seed potatoes	1981
Export of potatoes	1984
Milk and Milk products—	
Production/distribution of milk	1983
Production of milk products	1934
Meat—	
Slaughterhouse	1953
Meat Shipping Licence	1962
Bacon curing—control of standards	1962
Veterinary Inspection Certificate	1962
Veterinary Export Certificate	1977
Condemned meat—control of movement	1962
Poultrymeat—	
Slaughterhouse	1977
Export Certificate	1979
Eggs—	
Registration of packing station	1973
Registration of premises for storage/pickling	1966
Horticulture produce—	
Processing of horticultural produce	1971
Exporting of horticultural produce	1975
Seed Merchants/Packers/Processors—	
Registration	1974
Seed Testing Establishment	1974
Crop Inspector; seed sampler	1974
Bees—Import licences	1980
Foxes—permits for poison to kill	1974
Vermin Control—permit for gassing powder	1967
Livestock—Import Licence	1923
Poultry—Import Licence	1933
Mink—licence to keep	1967
Poultry Breeding/Rearing Establishments—licence to operate	1950
Welfare of Animals—licence for pet shops, riding establishments, boarding kennels and zoos	1972
Semen—	
To import bovine/porcine semen	1968
To operate storage centre	1982
Artificial Insemination—	
To conduct AI of Cattle	1976
To conduct AI of pigs	1978
To conduct AI of sheep	1981

Types of licences currently operated or granted	Year of first coming into operation
To operate pig AI Centre	1985
Embryos—	
To import (cattle)	1978
To operate embryo transplant centre	1978
To conduct embryo transplants	1978
Fishing—	
Permits for public angling facilities	1966
Permits for Lough Erne commercial fishermen	1927
Fish Culture Licences for Fish Farms	1966
Exemption Permits for the movement of fish and scientific investigations	1966
Permits to enable the introduction of certain prohibited species of live fish into inland waters	1966
Licences to fish for sea fish pressure stocks	1984
Licences to fish for sea fish non-pressure stocks	1984
Shellfish Fishery Licences for marine shellfish farms	1983
Permits to cover deposit of molluscan shellfish	1972
Permits to import live or dead oysters (other than frozen, canned or cooked oysters)	1973
Permits to cover deposit of live lobsters or their young	1982
Permits to import live or dead lobsters (other than frozen, canned or cooked lobsters)	1982
Licences to cover transhipment of pelagic sea fish from British fishing boats in Northern Ireland waters	1982
Tractors—certificates of approval in respect of safety cabs; exemption certificates from use of safety cabs/ roll bars	1981
Shooting permits on Lough Erne	1930
Navigation licences for passenger vessels on Lough Erne	1978
Principals' and representatives' licences for dealing in securities	1946
Licences to search and bore for and obtain petroleum in Northern Ireland	1964
Authorisation of persons or bodies to carry out tests to determine whether certain goods comply with the requirements of the Consumer Safety Legislation	1965
Certificates of approval of patterns of weighing and measuring equipment	1967
Certificate to operate public weighing or measuring equipment	1969
Mineral prospecting licences, mining licences, mining leases and mining permissions	1970
Licence to operate an employment agency and/or employment business	1983
Certificates of Training and Medical Fitness to dive	1983
Licences to work with Asbestos insulation or coating	1984
Game Licences	1860
Game Dealers' Licences	1860
Dog Racecourse Licences	1946
House to House Charitable Collections Exemption Orders	1952
Bookmakers' Licences	1957
Bookmaking Office Licences	1957
Totalisator Licences	1957
Certificate of Registration of Place of Worship	1863
Registrar General's Licence for Marriage	1984
Licence to carry on a nursing agency	1946
Warrants granting powers of entry to monitor compliance of the Medicines (Administration of Radioactive Substances) Regulations 1978	1984
Licences to experiment on animals	1876
Licences to import therapeutic substances	1927
Licences authorising the manufacture, possession or supply of certain drugs	1921
Registration of voluntary Children's homes	1950
Authorisation of persons to institute court proceedings	1950
Registration of voluntary adoption societies	1950
Road freight operators licence	1966
Road freight vehicle licence	1966
Farmers' vehicle licence	1966
Milk hauliers' licence	1966

Types of licences currently operated or granted	Year of first coming into operation
Road Service Licence (Buses)	1968
EEC passenger Authorisation (Road Service)	1975
Period Permit (Freight)	1980
Public Service Vehicle driving licence	1926
Public Service Vehicle vehicle licence	1926
Goods vehicle certificate	1934
Heavy Goods Vehicle Licence	1970
Approved Driving Instructor	1974
Vehicle Test Certificate	1975
TIR certificate (Transporte Internationale Routiers)	1975
Large Private Passenger Vehicle Certificate	1982
Driving Licences	1903
Vehicle excise licences and certificates (issued on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport)	1921
Licences for petrol pumps pipes, etc., in or under roads	1928
Orange badge permits for parking in contravention of waiting restrictions	1979
Permits for access to special roads	1963
Permits for advertising on or near special roads	1963
Permits for the erection of bus shelters, bus stops, milk platforms etc. on roads	1948
Permits to erect scaffolding, fences, etc. to make drains, to construct accesses, to make road openings, etc.	1948
Permits to erect beams, rails pipes, etc. across roads	1928
Permits to advertise or signpost on the surface of roads, street furniture, etc.	1948
Licences for the use of land owned by the Department of the Environment (NI)	1954
Permits for the placing of skips on roads	1981
permits for vehicles to use roads or bridges in contravention of weight restrictions	1955
Permits for use of special roads in contravention of motorway restrictions	1963
Licences under The Dumping at Sea Act 1974	1974
Consents to discharge trade or sewage effluents to waterways/underground stratum	1973
Licences to excavate or dig for archaeological purposes	1937
Exhumation licences in respect of public cemetries	1888
Licences for the reproduction of Ordnance Survey maps	1956
Licence to shoot or take Hen Pheasants or Red-legged Partridges	1928
Licence for scientific or educational purposes (in relation to wild birds)	1931
Licence for scientific or education purposes (in relation to wild animals, deer or wild plants)	1985
Licence for the purpose of photographing specially protected birds or animals at their nests or places of shelter	1985
Licence for the purpose of preventing the spread of disease (in relation to certain wild birds and animals)	1968
Licence for the purpose of preserving public health or public or air safety (eg control of birds at airfields)	1968
Licence for the purpose of ringing or marking, or examining any ring or mark on, wild birds or their eggs.	1931
Licence for the purpose of ringing or marking, or examining any ring or mark on, wild animals	1985
Licence for the purpose of conserving wild birds	1985
Licence for the purpose of conserving wild animals or wild plants or introducing them into particular areas	1985
Licence for the purpose of protecting any collection of wild birds or any zoological or botanical collection	1985
Licence for the purpose of falconry	1985
Licence for the purpose of aviculture	1968
Licence for the purposes of any public exhibition or competition (in relation to certain species used for aviculture)	1951
Licence for the purpose of taxidermy	1985
Licence for the use of stupefying bait	1968
Licence for the purpose of preventing serious damage to livestock foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber pasture or any other form of property or to fisheries.	1985

Types of licences currently operated or granted	Year of first coming into operation
Licence for the purpose of removing deer from one area to another	1985

Divis Flats

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment was made, prior to a decision being taken on the future of the Divis flats, as to the number of houses which could be built on the site if all the blocks were demolished.

Mr. Chris Patten: Since demolition was not considered to be appropriate no such assessment was made.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any survey has been made of possible risks to tenants' health from asbestos in the Divis flats.

Mr. Chris Patten No special survey has been carried out. Most of the materials in communal areas in Divis flats have already been replaced with non-asbestos products as part of a prepaint repair scheme. In the event of existing materials becoming damaged and hence dangerous (for example, through vandalism), the replacement of the material with non-asbestos products is undertaken immediately.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the estimated total cost of demolishing all the Divis flats.

Mr. Chris Patten: No such estimate has been made because total demolition was not considered to be appropriate.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated cost of the planned demolition of two blocks in the Divis flats and the refurbishment of the remaining blocks.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is £95,000 and £5½ million respectively.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated cost per flat of the proposed refurbishment of the Divis flats.

Mr. Chris Patten: The estimated unit cost for the Milford block is between £11,000 and £12,000. This is the only block which is at present proposed for refurbishing.

House Building (Cost)

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current average cost, excluding the cost of land, of new public sector houses being built in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: The overall averge tender cost of new Housing Executive dwellings in 1984-85 was £21,640. The average figure for Belfast was about £23,620.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he is satisfied with the precaution taken during the recent demolition of two blocks in the Divis flats, to ensure that asbestos was properly disposed of.

Mr. Chris Patten: Before demolition of the Whiehall and Farset blocks the Housing Executive had discussions with the Health and Safety inspectorate, medical authorities and the environmental health department of Belfast city council.

The strict guidelines of the Health and Safety inspectorate were followed in the removal of asbestos prior to demolition and the inspectorate monitored the work. Once the material was properly disposed of, air samples were taken by the industrial science division of the Department of Economic Development during the work and were found to have no asbestos content.

Test Holes (Cost)

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive of the three test holes at Agnes street, Carrickfergus, County Antrim, excavated by mechanical digger; what was the name of the contractors; if a charge was included for transporting the machine to the site; and why a local contractor was not hired for this project.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who has advised me that four holes were dug at the site at a cost of about £133 including the cost of bringing diggers to the location. The first two holes were dug by McFarlane Bros of Glengormley and the other two by V A Irwin of Drumbo who was working elsewhere in the area and had a digger readily available.

Mater Hospital

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) whether the Government have assessed the effects of the closure of the gas industry on the development plan for the Mater hospital;

(2) what estimate the Government have made for the additional expenditure that will arise from redesigning the development plan for the Mater hospital to use an alternative fuel; and how much expenditure has already been incurred in laying a new 6in gas main to the Mater hospital development site.

Mr. Chris Patten: While it had been proposed to use gas as the main fuel for the proposed new boiler plant, it has been decided to revert to oil. This has necessitated some redesign of the boilerhouse at an estimated additional cost of £86,700 including professional fees and has caused some delay to the programme. The cost of new gas mains already provided will be approximately £18,700, including professional fees.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is satisfied with the guidelines issued concerning the use of rubber and plastic bullets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Rubber baton rounds have not been generally issued to the security forces in Northern Ireland since 1975. I am satisfied that the operational instructions for the use of plastic baton rounds which are kept under constant review, take account of the circumstances in which baton rounds may need to be used in Northern Ireland, the need to minimise as far as possible the risk of injury, and the relevant legal implications.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much compensation has been paid to victims of injury or death due to the use of plastic bullets in each of the past six years to the latest date.

Mr. Scott: This information is not readily available and could be provided by the Northern Ireland Office and the Ministry of Defence only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been injured by rubber bullets in each of the past six years to the latest date.

Mr. Scott: Rubber baton rounds were withdrawn from general use by the security forces in 1975, and no one is known to have been injured by such rounds since that time.

Lear Fan

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what rights to the carbon fibre technology used in the Lear Fan project were, or are, held by Her Majesty's Government;

(2) against which assets belonging to the Lear Fan company the financial investments of Her Majesty's Government were secured; and to what extent these included a share in the technology of the aircraft.

Dr. Boyson: The Department of Economic Development holds a first fixed and floating charge on all assets of Lear Fan Ltd. The details of the agreements on the technology are complex. In summary the Lear Fan technology was acquired in June 1980 by the Lear Fan Research Ltd. Partnership from Lear Fan Corporation in return for an investment of $30 million in the project. The research partnership subsequently granted an exclusive licence to Lear Fan Ltd. to exploit the technology. When the September 1982 financial agreement was put in place the Department of Economic Development was interposed in the licensing arrangement. Under the terms of this arrangement the Department, on foot of a default by Lear Fan Ltd., has a limited period in which to seek a new sub-licensee or exploit the technology itself. Legal advice is being obtained on the current position.

Killeen (Terrorism)

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has provided him with the factual basis for his recent statement in relation to the Killeen atrocity that the perpetrators and the explosives came from the Irish Republic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have received a report on this tragic incident from the Chief Constable. It would not be right for me to comment publicly on the information it contains.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is satisfied with the performance of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its senior officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Commercial Explosives

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of commercial explosives recovered in Ulster can be traced back to the Irish Republic; and if he will define this in terms of weight.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. 85]: In 1984, 94·94 per cent. of commercial explosives recovered in Northern Ireland were manufactured for distribution in the Republic of Ireland. This represented 82·4 kilos out of a total of 86·79 kilos recovered.

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many incidents in the frontier area of Ulster during the past three years can be directly related to terrorist incursions from the Irish Republic; and if he will list these;

(2) how many incidents in the frontier area of Ulster during the past three years can be directly related to terrorist activity from within the Irish Republic; and if he will list these.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. 85]: It would not be right to disclose information which may be in the possession of the Royal Ulster Constabulary about incidents where charges may yet be brought.

Policing Policy

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals for future policing within Ulster have been discussed with the Irish Republic's Government; who has taken part in these discussions; if the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has been consulted; and whether he agrees with these proposals.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. 85]: The details of any discussions between Ministers and officials of Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Republic of Ireland about security co-operation must remain confidential. It would not be right for me to give the names of individuals who join in any such discussions or the views of those who may be consulted. The responsibility for future policing within Northern Ireland remains with Her Majesty's Government.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Building Societies

Mr. Eggar asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the Government's plans for new building society legislation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government have now considered the representations they have received on the Green Paper. Decisions have now been taken on many of the issues raised in the Green Paper. Early legislation to give effect to them will be introduced, I hope in the next Session of Parliament.

The Government's proposals will in general follow the Green Paper, which has been widely welcomed. The prime function of building societies will continue to be to provide a secure home for people's savings and to finance home ownership, but the present statutory constraints on their powers will be loosened. The legislation will confirm the structure of assets and liabilities set out in the Green Paper. At least 90 per cent. of "commercial assets" will

be in the form of class 1 loans — that is, loans on security of freehold or leasehold estate for the residential use of the borrower. This definition will extend to occupation by the borrower's dependants and to property which is not the borrower's main residence, if he lives in job-related accommodation. Up to 60 per cent. by floor area may be put to other residential or business uses without affecting eligibility for class 1.

All societies will be given new powers to offer financial and housing-related services, including money transmission, full insurance brokerage services, and the ability to act as agents for others in payments services and consumer credit. They will be empowered to provide access to the services of authorised investment businesses, whether or not members of the Stock Exchange; to offer structural survey services; and to set up estate agency subsidiaries.

Those societies with commercial assets in excess of a stated figure (propably £100 million) will in addition be able to hold residential land for sale, rent or development and to lend money other than on security of mortgage. They will also be able to set up, or invest in, subsidiary companies for carrying on business in other member states of the European Community.

The Green Paper proposals on the constitution of building societies will be confirmed, with some detailed modifications in the light of comments received. A minimum shareholding of £100 will be required for the exercise of rights as a member. Directors of building societies will be able to continue in office after the age of 70 only if their appointment is confirmed by special resolution at successive annual general meetings. There will be a procedure under which individual building societies may convert to company status with the approval of their members.

On the prudential supervision of societies, the legislation to be introduced by the Government will generally reflect the Green Paper proposals. Shares and deposits with all authorised societies will be treated as trustee investments under the Trustee Investments Act 1961.

On a number of matters, including those relating to conveyancing, decisions remain to be taken.

Economic Statistics

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1973, each year since 1979, and 1985 to date the level of manufacturing output based on 1980=100, the level of industrial production less oil and gas, and the level of gross domestic product less oil and gas.

Mr. Peter Rees: The information requested is as follows:

1980=100	*1973*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	**1985*
Manufacturing output	114·3	109·6	100·0	93·9	94·5	96·9	100·3	101·8
Industrial production less oil and gas†	111·5	108·4	100·0	94·6	94·8	96·9	96·7	98·4
Gross domestic product‡ less oil and gas†	98·8	103·2	100·0	97·7	99·1	101·7	103·9	105·5

* 1st Quarter.
† Class 13 of the Standard Industrial Classification 1980—extraction of mineral oil and natural gas.
‡ The output based measure of GDP, which is the appropriate measure for comparison by industry.

Board of Inland Revenue (Chairman's Letter)

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the full text of the letter dated 24 May from the chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue to the Association of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Taxes, copies of which have been circulated throughout Inland Revenue staff.

Mr. Moore: No; but I am quite happy to place copies of the letter in the Library of the House, and this has been done.

Customs and Excise (Computer Programmers)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons have resigned from the programming and experts computer sections of the computer services division of Customs and Excise headquarters in Southend in each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 June 1985, c.*173*]: The numbers of resignations amongst the programming and operational staff employed in computer services division in Customs and Excise headquarters at Southend in each of the last three financial years are:

	numbers
1982-83	14
1983-84	8
1984-85	11

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate he has made of the gap between the salary levels of computer programmers in the computer services division of the Customs and Excise Headquarters in Southend and comparable positions in private industry in the south-east of England; and what steps he will take to narrow the differential;

(2) if he will introduce a regional variation in additional payments to ensure that the Customs and Excise computer services division is in a position to offer comparable salaries to those in private industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 June 1985, c. *173*]: The pay and allowances of computer programmers in Customs and Excise computer services division at Southend, as for all civil servants, are determined centrally following negotiation with the recognised civil service trade unions. The Government have no reason to believe computer programmers in the civil service are not fairly remunerated.

There are no plans to introduce a regional variation in the allowances paid to computer programmers.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the headquarters of Customs and Excise in Southand has initiated a new programme to engage a private firm to undertake a major computer-based project for the computer services division; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 June 1985, c. *173*]: In developing and operating its computer systems, the Department draws both on its in-house capacity and on external resources. The extent to which it is appropriate to call on external ADP resources is something which is continuously assessed. There has been no recent decision to engage a private firm for a major new computer-based project.

Income Statistics (West Midlands)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of citizens residing in the West Midlands county who presently earn *(a)* £5,000 to £9,999, *(b)* £10,000 to £14,999, *(c)* £15,000 to £19,999, *(d)* £20,000 to £24,999, *(e)* £25,000 to £29,999 and *(f)* more than £30,000.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to my reply*, 3 June 1985, c. *67*]: I regret that the information originally given was not confined to the West Midlands county but included the rest of the West Midlands region also. Estimates for the county alone are as follows:

Range of earned income before tax £	*Number of single people and married couples thousands*
5,000 to 9,999	411
10,000 to 14,999	117
15,000 to 19,999	24
20,000 to 24,999	8
25,000 to 29,999	3
30,000 and over	5

SCOTLAND

Tinnitus Masking Devices

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many tinnitus masking devices have been prescribed for National Health Service patients in each of the health boards in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Broadleaved Woodland

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in the year to 31 March the Forestry Commission issued felling licences which permitted the clear-felling of broadleaved woodland for conversion to agriculture; and how many hectares of woodland this totalled.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) on how many occasions, in the year to 31 March, the Forestry Commission issued felling licences for broadleaved woods; of these, how many licences had conditions requiring the replanting purely of broadleaved trees; and how many hectares of woodland this totalled;

(2) on how many occasions in the year to 31 March the Forestry Commission consulted the Agricultural Department over applications for felling licences to clear woodland for agricultural purposes.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases were reported to the Forestry Commission in the year to 31 March of broadleaved woodland felling being carried out without felling licences when a felling licence was required by law; what was the total area so felled; and how many prosecutions resulted from these cases.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is as follows:

Number of cases	*Area (hectares)*	*Number of prosecutions*
21	39·9	4

In addition, prosecutions are pending in six cases covering 22·1 hectares, and nine other cases covering 26·57 hectares are still under investigation.

Rate Rebates

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the proposed allocation of the rate rebates provided under the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. Ancram: I am not clear whether the hon. Member has in mind the likely demand for revaluation rate rebates in each of the rating authority areas. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has been trying to collect this information, much of which is to hand; the rest should be available shortly and I shall write to the hon. Member when it is.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make arrangements to inform all those with revaluations above 300 per cent. of their previous valuations of the help now to be made available.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend will ensure that suitable publicity is given to the provisions of the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill 1985.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he studied the revaluations in *(a)* Fife, *(b)* Central, *(c)* Grampian, *(d)* Borders, *(e)* Highland and *(f)* Lothian regions before announcing his package of special assistance to ratepayers.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend had regard at different stages in the last year to the information provided at successive stages by the assessors as to the overall effects of revaluation. Before making his announcement on 14 May he took account of other relevant information available to him but he did not study the results of revaluation in the sense of inspecting comprehensively the valuation rolls for any areas.

List D Schools

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future financial and administrative arrangements for list D schools.

Mr. Younger: Following my statement on 30 July 1984, discussions were held with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and with other interested parties about the future arrangements for these schools.

I have considered the views expressed in these discussions and in response to earlier consultations initiated in August 1983 I have reached the conclusion that the schools should continue to remain under their present voluntary management but that closer association with local authorities would be advantageous. Progress in this direction will be impeded so long as my Department is involved directly in funding and day-to-day operation of the schools. I have decided that regional and islands authorities should assume full responsibility for meeting the costs of maintaining at the schools children for whom they are directly responsible and that the grants representing half those costs currently paid by my Department to the schools should be withdrawn with effect from 31 March 1986. I believe that this adjustment in the arrangements for financial support will encourage authorities to enter into a meaningful partnership with the voluntary managed list D schools used by them in order to plan and co-ordinate the services provided by the schools over time with other child care facilities in their areas. Accordingly, I propose to make a direction under schedule 7(2) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 bringing to an end my powers in relation to list D schools.

I recognise that such a transfer could, without adequate financial arrangements, place an additional burden on local authorities. I propose therefore to take this into account in the next rate support grant settlement by increasing both aggregate Exchequer grant and relevant expenditure by the full amount of the estimated increase in their expenditure. I also propose to continue direct funding to the managers of Rossie school, Montrose and St. Mary's Kenmure, Bishopbriggs under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act since these schools are mainly secure establishments and have a specialised function as well as accepting children from the whole of Scotland.

My Department is now arranging to discuss with the schools and the authorities concerned a number of detailed questions arising from my decision.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 7 June 1985

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Court

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Attorney-General if he will detail the average waiting time prior to trial for each Crown court; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The average waiting times between committal and trial for all defendants dealt with at each Crown court centre during 1984 are set out in the table. Despite the increase of about 50 per cent. in committals for trial to the Crown court between 1979 and 1984, measures including the appointment of additional judges and the provision of additional court rooms helped to reduce the national average wating time for all defendants from 17·6 weeks in 1979 to 14·2 weeks in 1983: in 1984 the figure increased marginally to 14·3 weeks. Average waiting times for defendants remanded in custody have been consistently lower.

Average waiting time (in weeks) between committal for trial and start of trial for defendants dealt with at each Crown court centre during 1984

Midland and Oxford Circuit

	Weeks
Birmingham	11·7
Coventry	7·5
Derby	8·7
Dudley*	5·2
Grimsby	10·5
Hereford	7·4
Leicester	8·4
Lincoln	12·9
Northampton	6·9
Nottingham	9·4
Oxford	11·3
Peterborough	6·4
Shrewsbury	9·2
Stafford	9·5
Stoke-on-Trent	5·3
Warwick	9·1
Worcester	8·3

* Including Walsall and Wolverhampton.

North-Eastern Circuit

	Weeks
Beverley*	11·3
Doncaster	9·9
Durham	9·4
Huddersfield	12·0
Leeds	12·9
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	10·4
Sheffield	9·5
Teesside	12·7
Wakefield	9·7
York	14·6

* Including Kingston-upon-Hull

Northern Circuit

	Weeks
Bolton	11·0
Burnley	11·2
Carlisle*	8·9
Liverpool	11·6
Manchester	12·2
Preston†	9·6

* Including Kendal.
† Including Barrow and Lancaster.

South Eastern Circuit

	Weeks
Acton	27·9
Aylesbury	15·9
Bedford	10·5
Cambridge	15·7
Central Criminal Court	30·0
*Chelmsford	17·4
Chichester	17·1
Croydon	23·4
Inner London	18·1
†Ipswich	10·8
Kingston-on-Thames	15·6
Knightsbridge	25·9
Lewes	19·2
‡Maidstone	19·0
‖Norwich	13·3
Reading	17·8
St. Albans	16·0
Snaresbrook	23·9
Southwark	22·0
Wood Green	23·7

* Including Southend.
† Including Bury St. Edmunds.
‡ Including Canterbury.
‖ Including Kings Lynn.

Wales and Chester Circuit

	Weeks
Caernarvon	14·9
Cardiff	10·6
Carmarthen	10·0
Chester	12·9
Dolgellau	13·7
Haverfordwest	5·7
Knutsford	12·5
Merthyr Tydfil	9·2
Mold	13·9
Newport Gwent	11·2
Swansea	7·7
Warrington	16·7
Welshpool	15·2

Western Circuit

	Weeks
Barnstaple	14·2
Bodmin	11·3
Bournemouth	10·2
Bristol	10·4
Dorchester	9·3
Exeter	10·2
Gloucester	10·9
Newport I.O.W.	10·8
Plymouth	8·5
Portsmouth	10·5
Salisbury	6·9
Southampton	8·4
Swindon	8·7
Taunton	14·5
Winchester	11·8

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Adults (Basic Education)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why he has rejected an appeal submitted to him by the adult literacy and basic skills unit to establish a legal framework for education authorities to provide basic education for adults.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have received no such appeal from the adult literacy and basic skills unit. In response to a question put to me recently at the unit's 10th anniversary conference, I made clear my view that the case for amending the existing provisions of the Education Act 1944 had not been made out. New legislation, which would inevitably be complex, would I believe distract attention and energy from other important initiatives, such as the literacy campaign itself, in the further education field. The duties imposed by section 41 of the 1944 Act apply no less to adult education than to other areas of further education.

Burnham Committee

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will invite members of the Burnham management committee to have discussions about the possibilty of amending the composition of the Burnham committee.

Sir Keith Joseph: No. All the associations represented on the teachers' panel of the Burnham primary and secondary committee have now confirmed their ability to provide a statement of their membership in accordance with the review which I announced on 2 May at column 189.

Wandsworth (Reorganisation)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be able to announce his decision about secondary school reorganisation in Wandsworth.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend's approval of these proposals was announced on 6 June.

DEFENCE

Cumbria (Land Acquisition)

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy over acquisition of land in the Warcop area of Cumbria for dry training purposes.

Mr. Lee: Policy on the use of the defence estate was set out in paragraphs 620 to 622 of the 1985 Statement on Defence Estimates (Cmnd. 9430-1).

Paragraph 621 noted that current land holding cannot meet all training requirements and that it is the Ministry's intention to acquire additional land whenever possible, usually by extending existing training areas. This policy naturally applies to Warcop, which is one of the six principal training areas in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any need of more land in the Warcop area of Cumbria for live firing.

Mr. Lee: We have no plans to acquire land outside the boundaries of the existing training area for live firing.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the name of the firm of local agents acting on behalf of his Department to acquire land for training purposes in the area of Cumbria.

Mr. Lee: The Property Services Agency of the DOE acts as agents for all our land acquisitions in the United Kingdom. No firm of local agents has been appointed to acquire land in Cumbria.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence with regard to his proposals to acquire land at Stainmore in Cumbria for training purposes, what stage his negotiations with local landowners have reached; and whether he is negotiating for lease or freehold.

Mr. Lee: There have been negotiations with local landowners at Stainmore for purchase of one area of land and lease of another, but no binding commitment can be entered into in advance of hearing the views of the local planning authority on the proposal to use the land for training.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence what studies he has carried out into the suitability of the three plots of land at Stainmore in Cumbria which he proposes to acquire for training purposes.

Mr. Lee: The land has been inspected by the appropriate military authorities, who have confirmed that it would be suitable for training not involving live firing.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the brief he has given to land agents in Cumbria who have been instructed to acquire land for dry training purposes.

Mr. Lee: No land agents other than those of the Property Services Agency have been instructed to acquire land for dry training purposes. The PSA was informed of the military requirement and asked to consult the military authorities if land which appears to be suitable becomes available.

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence what factors have led his Department to seek to use land in Cumbria previously considered for inclusion in an area of outstanding natural beauty for purposes of military training.

Mr. Lee: The reason for seeking to acquire extra land in the vicinity of Warcop is that the existing Warcop training area does not have the capacity to meet all current training requirements. The acquisition of an additional area of land such as the one at Stainmore for dry training —that is without live firing—and the carrying out of drills before using the ranges at Warcop would reduce the pressure on the existing training area.

Civil Service Pay

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Defence why civil servants working in his Department have not yet received their pay increase for the current year.

Mr. Butler: Civil Service pay rates are negotiated centrally by Her Majesty's Treasury and any increases are paid on its authority. Departments were authorised to pay new rates for non-industrials operative from 1 April 1985

as and when the union with negotiating rights for particular grades indicated acceptance or agreement. Also payroll centres need time to reprogramme computers.

Staff represented by the Civil Service Union received their increases in May. The vast majority of staff represented by other unions which accepted later will receive their new rates in June. Negotiations of new rates for industrial grades operative from 1 July are still in progress.

Military Equipment (Sales to Chile)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance has been given by his Department to Laird (Anglesey) Ltd. about the possible sale of Centaur military vehicles to Chile.

Mr. Lee: Laird (Anglesey) has received the normal assistance available to exporters of defence equipment from the defence sales organisation in connection with the possible sale of Centaur to Chile.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence which United Kingdom companies are receiving assistance from the Defence Sales Organisation about the possible sale of military equipment to Chile.

Mr. Lee: A range of United Kingdom defence companies make use of the services of the defence sales organisation in connection with prospective sales to Chile, as they do for other markets throughout the world. Purchases of armaments by Chile are, of course, governed by Her Majesty's Government's policy on such sales to that country and require an export licence in each case.

PRIME MINISTER

King Hussein of Jordan (Meeting)

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent meeting with King Hussein of Jordan.

The Prime Minister: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

Chinese Prime Minister (Meeting)

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent meeting with the Prime Minister of China.

The Prime Minister: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Police Complaints System

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many representations have been received by his Department since the publication of the consultative paper on a police complaints system for Northern Ireland; and if he will place copies of such representations in the Library.

Mr. Scott: The period allowed for comments on the consultative paper ends on 14 June. Two responses have been received so far. It would not be appropriate for copies of such responses to be placed in the Library.

Commercial Explosives

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of the component elements for home-made explosives recovered in Ulster can be traced back to the Irish Republic; and if he will define this in terms of weight.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. *85*]: The nature of the components used in improvised explosives makes it impossible to distinguish accurately their source. The agricultural fertiliser on which home-made explosives are based is widely used in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many formal apologies Her Majesty's Government have received from the Irish Republic Government during the past three years concerning terrorist incursions or activity emanating from their territory.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. *85*]: No apologies have been requested or received. Irish Ministers have often made clear in public statements their abhorrence of terrorism, their sympathy for those killed or injured and their determination to help take action against the terrorist threat.

Killeen (Bomb Incident)

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the official statement from Dublin that the Killeen bomb was not detonated from within the Irish Republic was made in response to any specific allegation that it had been; and whether it has been possible to establish conclusively the detonation point.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. *85*]: No official statement was made identifying the point of detonation. It would not be in the public interest for me to disclose details of any information which is available to the police about the point of detonation.

Housing Benefits

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the review being carried out by officials of housing benefits in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 June 1985, c. *140*]: The review team of officials issued a consultative document requesting written evidence in June 1984. Submissions were received from a wide range of interested local bodies and individuals and representatives of a number of organisations also gave oral evidence. The subsequent report was made available to the Great Britain housing benefit review team so that the Northern Ireland team's views could be taken into account in framing recommendations.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is satisfied with the performance of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its senior officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 June 1985]: Yes. The Chief Constable and the officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary work courageously and diligently to keep the peace, uphold the law and protect the citizens of Northern Ireland in the face of considerable difficulties. They have my full support.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Pesticides

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether 2,4,5-T or related substances or any substance whose production or decomposition precipitates the production of dioxin is being manufactured in the United Kingdom at present.

Mr. Trippier: No.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what amounts of 2,4,5-T, during the last three years, were *(a)* imported into the United Kingdom, identifying the country of origin, *(b)* used in the United Kingdom and *(c)* re-exported from the United Kingdom, identifying the importing nations.

Mr. Channon: There were 159 tonnes of 2,4,5-T imported in 1982 and 300 tonnes in 1983. Since then there have been no imports of the substance. Data are compiled on a country of consignment basis so it is not possible to identify the country of origin of these imports.

Information is not available about the amounts of 2,4,5-T used in the United Kingdom. However, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 31 January 1985 at column 279.

No information is available in respect of any exports of 2,4,5-T.

Industry and Parliament Trust (Exhibition)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the Industry and Parliament Trust to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. Arrangements have been made for such an exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall to take place from Monday 15 July to Friday 19 July 1985.

Defective Products Directive

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the purpose of the draft EEC directive on liability for defective products which is being considered at the Common Market's Internal Market Council on Monday 10 June; and what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the introduction of such a directive.

Mr. Fletcher: The purpose of the draft EC directive is the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the member states concerning liability for defective products. In particular, the draft directive seeks to establish throughout the Community that producers shall be strictly liable for defects in their products, subject only to certain clearly defined defences and limitations. The draft directive is not on the agenda for the forthcoming meeting of the Internal Market Council.

We agree with the aims of this draft directive. In the negotiations with other Member States we have sought to establish that the defences and limitations are such as to achieve a fair balance between the legitimate interests of consumers and manufacturers. On this basis, we are supporting current efforts to reach an early agreement on the main points of the directive.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with the Confederation of British Industry and other industrial organisations about the effect on British industry and its costs of the draft directive on liability for defective products which is being considered at the Internal Market Council on 10 June.

Mr. Fletcher: My officials have had regular discussions with the CBI and other industrial organisations about the effect of the draft directive. The Secretary of State has also recently replied to a letter from the CBI on this subject.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to establish whether British insurance companies would be willing to provide cover to industrial firms for obligations and risks under the draft directive on liability for defective products in advance of the consideration of the directive by the Internal Market Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: My Department has already established, through contacts with the United Kingdom insurance industry, that the draft directive should not affect the availability of insurance cover for industrial firms, though it may have a marginal effect on the level of premiums. This confirms earlier findings of research undertaken at the European level by the EC Commission.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the proposal in the EEC directive on liability for defective products that the Commission should be empowered, without reference to member states, to remove the development risk defence from the provisions of the directive after the directive has been in force for a period of seven years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: There is no such proposal in the draft directive. We would not accept a directive which gave the Commission power to repeal the defence without reference to member states.

Tour Operators and Travel Agents

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) on what basis the Director General of Fair Trading asked the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to investigate the trading arrangements between the Association of British Travel Agents tour operators specifically and travel agents;

(2) when he expects that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's investigation into the trading arrangements between the Association of British Travel Agents tour operators and travel agents will be finalised;

(3) what is his estimate of the cost to public funds of the investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers

Commission into the trading arrangements between the Association of British Travel Agents tour operators and travel agents.

Mr. Fletcher: The Director General of Fair Trading asked the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to investigate whether a complex monopoly exists in the relationship of retail travel agents with tour operators and, if so, whether the practice of some tour operators of prohibiting travel agents from selling overseas package holidays at reduced prices and/or with incentives is against the public interest. The commission's report is due by 31 July 1986.

It is not practicable to allocate costs to particular inquiries, but the cost of the commission's programme, often of 10 to 12 active references at any one time, was about £2 million for 1984-85.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Point of Entry Imports (VAT)

Mr. Rowe asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what proportion of the total revenue collected from charging value added tax on imports at point of entry will be repaid within three months on reclaims to registered traders;

(2) what percentage of the total revenue collected by charging value added tax on imports at point of entry he estimates will be repaid within the same month through reclaims to registered traders.

Mr. Hayhoe: There is no system of repayment specifically for VAT on imports. Registered traders who incur VAT on imports may offset it against the output tax for which they are accountable under the same conditions as for the tax they incur on their purchases within the United Kingdom. The net tax due is payable to Customs and Excise quarterly, but, if the trader is regularly entitled to credits of tax, these may be claimed monthly. While a precise breakdown is not available, it is thought that something of the order of a tenth of the VAT on imports by registered traders is paid by traders who make their returns monthly; the remainder pay quarterly.

Mr. Rowe asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue he expects to collect in the first full year of operation of value added tax collection at point of entry imports.

Mr. Hayhoe: About £10 billion.

Forestry

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he intends to review the fiscal support or other subsidies currently given to both public and private upland afforestation projects; and whether the Government will now carry out a cost/benefit study of the planting programme of both the Forestry Commission and publicly supported private afforestation.

Mr. Moore: No. The existing tax arrangements for forestry are of long standing and I have at present no plans to change them. The Forestry Commission is required to meet financial targets laid down by Ministers which are regularly reviewed. A periodic review of grant levels under the commission's grant schemes is currently in progress and a major review of policy in relation to broadleaved woodlands is nearing completion.

Benefits

Mr. Dormand asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which social security payments, pensions and related payments are not subject to income tax.

Mr. Moore: The following social security benefits are taxable: retirement pension, old person's pension, widow's pension, widowed mother's allowance, widow's allowance, industrial death benefit, invalid care allowance, unemployment benefit, and supplementary benefit paid to the unemployed and to strikers.

The remaining social security benefits — including any child additions to the benefits listed — are not taxable.

Payments made by employers under the statutory sick pay scheme are taxable.

Economic Secretary (Speech)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a copy of the speech delivered by the Economic Secretary to the Building Societies Association on 6 June.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have already done so.

WALES

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has concluded his consideration of the Welsh Water Authority's report on arrangements for representing consumer interests.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has approved the authority's report with modifications. A copy of the report, as modified, has been placed in the Library, together with a copy of the Secretary of State's letter of approval to the chairman of the Welsh Water Authority.

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to make any changes to his Department's cash limits in connection with expenditure on rate support grants to local authorities in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate for class XVIII, vote 2, the cash limit is being reduced by £5,600,000 from £834,200,000 to £828,600,000. There is no direct public expenditure borne on this vote. In the light of local authorities' budgeted expenditure for 1985-86, this reduction reflects the proposed abatement of block grant for 1985-86, in accordance with the proposals set out in paragraph 38 of the Welsh rate support grant report 1985-86 which was approved by the House on 16 January 1985. The adjustment of block grant will, of course, be subject to the approval of the requisite supplementary rate support grant report by the House.

Community Nursing Services

Mr. Hubbard-Miles asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has decided the membership of the Review Group on Community Nursing Services for Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Yes. As I announced on 2 April 1985, at column *515*, the review of community nursing services for Wales will be chaired by Mrs. N. L. Edwards, chairman of the Gwynedd health authority. Following consultation with a wide range of interested bodies, we decided to invite the people listed as follows to form the review group:

Mrs. A. Fawcett-Henesey, Nurse Adviser, RCN, Society of Primary Health Care Nursing.
Mr. M. D. Scott, Senior Nurse (Community Psychiatric), West Glamorgan.
Dr. D. T. Jones, Chief Administrative Medical Officer, Clwyd.
Mrs. M. Morgan, Chief Administrative Nursing Officer, Powys.
Dr. J. H. Owens, General Practitioner, Porthcawl.
Mrs. B. Roberts, Midwifery Liaison Officer, Wrexham.
Miss J. Sinnott, Director of Nursing Services (Community), West Glamorgan.
Dr. S. Smail, Senior Lecturer in General Practice, University of Wales, College of Medicine.
Miss F. Welch, Senior Lecturer in Health Visiting, University of Wales, College of Medicine.

There will be a further member of the team with expertise in social services.

I am delighted to say that all have accepted the invitation. They will bring to the group a wide range of experience. I am certain their work will make a signal contribution to the future health care of the people of Wales.

TRANSPORT

Long Sutton and Sutton Bridge Bypass

Mr. Body asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the date when the draft order for the Long Sutton and Sutton Bridge bypass was ready for publication.

Mrs. Chalker: The draft line order for the bypass was ready for publication in November 1984. My hon. Friend is aware of the problems delaying publication.

Motorways (Maintenance)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Transport if statistical information is available on the maintenance condition of motorways in recent years, in a format such as the defects index mentioned in the national road maintenance condition survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The defects index contained in reports of the national road maintenance condition survey is compiled from the results of visual surveys carried out by highway authorities. Although some visual surveying is done on motorways, the bulk of the information required to access their condition is obtained from regular deflectograph surveys. These surveys showed that in August 1984 20 per cent. of the motorway network in England had a residual life of up to five years, 18 per cent. had 6 to 10 years residual life, 20 per cent. had 11 to 15 years and 42 per cent. had over 16 years residual life. Similar information about the residual life of all-purpose roads in England and Wales in 1983 is contained in table 2 of the report of the 1984 national road maintenance condition survey.

M25 and M42 Motorways

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the studies to identify any particular stretches of the M25 and M42 motorways liable to fog to be completed.

Mrs. Chalker: The study is being carried out for my Department by the Meteorological Office. Its draft report is expected to be received by the end of the month. Decisions will then be taken on whether action is necessary in any fog-prone areas identified.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Dover asked the Secretary of State for Transport which airlines will be making use of the facilities of terminal 4 at Heathrow airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Airports Authority to determine. It s currently having discussions with British Airways and KLM.

Mr. Dover asked the Secretary of State for Transport when terminal 4 at Heathrow airport will start to be used by airlines; what is its capacity in passengers per year; and by what date this additional capacity will be needed at Heathrow.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Airports Authority, but terminal 4 should start to be used by airlines early in 1986. It will be capable of handling 8 million passengers a year. The new terminal will be needed for the 1986 summer season.

Mr. Dover asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the construction of terminal 4 at Heathrow airport will be completed.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that the main construction work will be completed by the end of July, but fitting out the terminal will not be completed until early 1986.

ENVIRONMENT

Domestic Rating

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters have been received by his Department expressing concern at the present system of domestic rating.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since the studies into the local government finance system were announced by my right hon. Friend on 10 October last, my Department has received approximately 800 representations expressing concern at the present system of domestic rating.

Local Authority Dwellings

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, in the light of the conclusions of paragraph 5.21 of his Department's report. "Local Authority Empty Dwellings", issued in January, about the need for expenditure to halt the pattern of decay, what steps he intends to take to implement this conclusion in relation to the repair and improvement of local authority dwellings.

Sir George Young: The public expenditure plans announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement allow

local authorities in England to spend £2·3 billion on housing capital investment, a very considerable sum by any standard. It is for local authorities to decide how best to use the resources available to them.

However, capital expenditure on repair and improvement has often been wasted because it has not been accompanied by improvements in housing management. As a result of the empty dwellings report, my Department will shortly issue a circular to authorities setting out ways in which better management can help to reduce numbers of empty dwellings.

Bed and Breakfast

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are currently being housed by local authorities in bed and breakfast establishments.

Sir George Young: It is estimated that at the end of December 1984, the latest date for which information is available, there were some 3,300 homeless households in England being housed by local authorities in bed and breakfast accommodation. My Department does not collect information on the size of homeless households.

Unfit Dwellings

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many dwellings throughout the United Kingdom have been designated unfit for human habitation at the latest available date.

Sir George Young: The most recent estimate available for England appears in table A of part 1 of the "English House Condition Survey, 1981", a copy of which is in the Library.

For information for other parts of the United Kingdom, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Housing Construction/Rehabilitation

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the percentage of gross domestic product invested in housing construction/rehabilitation in the following countries in 1984 *(a)* West Germany, *(b)* France and *(c)* Belgium; and what was the equivalent figure for the United Kingdom.

Sir George Young: The latest available information for all the countries mentioned is for the year 1982 and is given in the following table:

Fixed Investment in Housing as a percentage of GDP in 1982

	Percentage
Germany (Federal Republic)	6·1
France	5·3
Belgium	3·5
United Kingdom	3·4

Note: Includes new building and expenditure on major improvements. In 1983, fixed investment in housing in the United Kingdom increased to 3·6 per cent. of GDP.

Radioactivity Levels

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 20 areas in England and Wales with the highest levels of naturally occurring radioactivity and the reasons why these levels occur in the areas concerned.

Mr. Waldegrave: According to information supplied by the National Radiological Protection Board the 20 sites in England and Wales which show the highest gamma radiation dose rates due to naturally occurring radioactivity present in the ground are as follows:

National Grid 10km Square	*Location*	*County*	*Microgray per year*
SX66	Dartmoor Forest West of Buckfastleigh	Devon	964
SW33	St. Just	Cornwall	876
SW42	South West of Penzance	Cornwall	833
SW43	North of Penzance	Cornwall	804
SX78	Dartmoor Forest North West of Newton Abbot	Devon	797
SW64	Camborne and Redruth	Cornwall	795
NU01	Branton West of Alnwick	Northumberland	763
SX67	Dartmoor Forest West of Newton Abbot	Devon	754
SW63	South of Camborne	Cornwall	691
SW32	Lands End	Cornwall	687
SX16	East of Bodmin	Cornwall	677
NT91	Cheviot Hills West of Alnwick	Northumberland	670
SW95	West of St. Austell	Cornwall	659
NT92	Cheviot Hills South West of Wooler	Northumberland	641
SW53	South of Hayle	Cornwall	638
NT80	Cheviot Hills East of Carter Bar	Northumberland	637
NT81	Cheviot Hills West of Alnwick	Northumberland	617
SX37	South of Launceston	Cornwall	615
NZ22	North of Darlington	Durham	600
SE28	West of Ripon	North Yorkshire	588

For comparison, the average value for England and Wales is about 340 micrograys per year in air. In all the cases listed, the explanation for the higher levels of radioactivity is the present in the ground of minerals with radioactive content. Radioactivity may also manifest itself in the form of radon gas.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the monitoring of the atmosphere in and around nuclear establishments operated by the Central Electricity Generating Board and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Waldegrave: The nuclear establishments of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) are required under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to seek authorisation from relevant Ministers for any discharge of radioactive wastes to atmosphere. As a condition of these authorisations the UKAEA and CEGB are required to monitor the discharges and their effects on the environment. These results are checked by the authorising Departments which also undertake independent monitoring. I am satisfied that the discharges continue to pose no threat to the public.

STOLport, Newham

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list his powers to require the costs of sound insulation, up to given standards, of domestic dwellings adjacent to the proposed STOLport in Newham, to be borne by persons or bodies other than their owners or occupiers.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend knows of no such statutory powers.

Stonehenge

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange to provide a site in the Stonehenge area for people wishing to celebrate the summer solstice.

Mr. Macfarlane: The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission is responsible for managing the circle area of land occupied by the Stonehenge monument itself. My Department owns no other land in the Stonehenge area suitable for this purpose.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the report of Her Majesty's Hazardous Wastes Inspectorate regarding waste disposal facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 June 1985]: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson) on Wednesday 5 June 1985 at columns *166-67*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

NATO

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the cost to Britain of contributions to NATO's civil budget in each year since 1979; and whether he will provide the figures in the 1986 defence Estimates.

Mr. Luce: The total contributions by the United Kingdom to the NATO civil budget since 1979 are as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	5·810
1980-81	6·140
1981-82	6·476
1982-83	5·975
1983-84	7·306
1984-85	7·922

The total annual United Kingdom contribution is not published in the Defence Estimates. Contributions to the NATO civil budget by individual Government Departments are published already in the relevant Departments' annual estimates.

Nigeria

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice Her Majesty's Government give to intending travellers to Nigeria regarding their personal safety in that country.

Mr. Rifkind: We are ready to give appropriate advice on personal safety to intending travellers to Nigeria depending on the nature of their visit and the areas to be visited. In general, we advise travellers to take all sensible precautions against, for example, armed robbery, muggings and petty theft, including handbag snatching; to leave valuables in a safe place; and, if they wish, to check on arrival with the British high commission in Lagos or the deputy high commission in Kaduna on any specific local problems. Our geographic department in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is, of course, ready to give advice based on background knowledge of the country and the latest advice from the British high commission, Lagos.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what instructions are given to officials in his Department concerning the nature of the information they should make available to hon. Members seeking advice on behalf of constituents about current circumstances in Nigeria.

Mr. Rifkind: The instructions given to officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are that they should give hon. Members advice on current circumstances in Nigeria based on the latest information on the subject received from the British high commission in Lagos. Though we endeavour to give hon. Members every assistance, our resources are limited and we cannot give detailed briefing at short notice covering all aspects of current circumstances in Nigeria.

British Subjects Overseas

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help is made available by Her Majesty's Government to British subjects on lawful business in overseas countries who encounter problems with the civil authorities in the country concerned.

Mr. Renton: The scale of assistance given can range from advice to diplomatic intervention, depending on the circumstances of each individual or joint case.

Decade of Women Conference (Nairobi)

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the name and

rank of the official who will be accompanying the delegation to Nairobi for the end of the decade of women conference.

Mr. Renton: In addition to Dame Anne Warburton DCVO, CMG, the United Kingdom permanent representative to the office of the United Nations at Geneva, who will be deputy leader of the delegation, the four officials in the delegation will be Mr. R. C. Fursland, first secretary, and Mr. R. W. Barnett and Mr. R. J. Wildash, second secretaries in Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service, and Mr. M. J. Gillespie, principal at the Home Office.

Jeddah (Impounded Equipment)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any progress has yet been made on the recovery of the wall of death equipment belonging to Mr. Sergei Chityan of Ealing, currently impounded at the port of Jeddah.

Mr. Luce: I am glad to say that the Saudi port authorities have now agreed that Mr. Chityan's equipment may be released after payment of the necessary demurrage charges.

Discrimination Against Women Convention (Ratification)

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to ratify the United Nations convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Mr. Renton: As I told the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 10 May, at column *513*, we are still considering this convention in the light of our existing legislation and hope to be in a position to make an announcement about ratification soon.

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Sumberg asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries that are known by his Department to have made representations to the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics about the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Mr. Wallenberg was a Swedish diplomat, and it is therefore the Swedish Government who have taken the lead in seeking clarification of the Soviet authorities as to the precise fate of their former representative in Hungary. We do not have a comprehensive list of other counries which have made representations about Mr. Wallenberg.

SCOTLAND

Fish Stocks (Bird Damage)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what scientific studies have been completed or are in hand to assess the alleged damage done to salmon, trout and migratory trout stocks by *(a)* cormorants, *(b)* red breasted mergansers and *(c)* goosanders in Scottish lochs and rivers; and if he will publish any investigations into this subject that have been carried out by his officials.

Mr. John MacKay: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland published papers in 1962 and 1965 in the freshwater and salmon fisheries research series entitled respectively "The Goosander and Red-Breasted Merganser as Predators of Salmon in Scottish Waters" and "The Distribution and Food of the Cormorant in Scottish Waters." These publications assessed the effects of those species on Atlantic salmon and trout in Scotland. Scientific studies of the damage done to salmon, trout and migratory trout stocks by cormorants, red-breasted mergansers and goosanders in Scotland would be lengthy and expensive and no such research is in progress or planned.

Radioactivity

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the 20 areas in Scotland with the highest levels of naturally occurring radioactivity and the reasons why these levels occur in the areas concerned.

Mr. Ancram: The National Radiological Protection Board has measured in Scotland gamma radiation arising from rocks and soils in about 80 per cent. of the 10 kilometre grid squares of the national grid. Those showing the greatest values are listed as follows. The average value for Scotland is about 320 micrograys per year in air. Naturally occurring radioactivity in rocks arises because of the incorporation in them of radioactive elements when the rocks were formed.

The National Radiological Protection Board is measuring also the concentration in buildings of the radioactive gas, radon, which derives largely from the ground under the building. This work will be reported when it is complete.

Grid square	*Micrograys/ year*	*Location*	*Region*
NH 90	778	Glen More, near Aviemore	Highland
NO 39	739	Ballater	Grampian
NO 28	728	Balmoral Forest, near Braemar	Grampian
NT 82	713	Cheviot Hills, South of Kelso	Borders
NO 49	697	East of Aboyne	Grampian
ND 02	675	North of Helmsdale	Highland
NC 91	658	South of Helmsdale	Highland
NM 94	648	Tynribbie, North of Connel	Strathclyde
NJ 90	633	Aberdeen	Grampian
NM 75	627	Gleann Dubh, South of Mallaig	Highland
ND 05	623	South West of Thurso	Highland
NN 38	621	Glen Spean, East of Fort William	Highland
ND 01	613	Helmsdale	Highland
NN 14	604	Glen Etive, South East of Ballachulish	Highland
NO 38	553	Glen Muick, near Ballater	Grampian
NJ 20	551	North West of Ballater	Grampian
NO 69	547	Banchory	Grampian
NO 59	544	Aboyne	Grampian
NN 59	535	West of Newtonmore	Highland
NO 79	532	West of Banchory	Grampian

Aerial Spraying

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those areas within Scotland, England and Wales, respectively, for which the Forestry Commission has sought approval from the Department for the use of fenitrothion for the purposes of blanket aerial spraying during 1985; if he will detail the proposed time scale of the respective sprayings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The areas for which the commission sought approval and those for which limited clearance was granted under the pesticides safety precautions scheme are all in Scotland and are as follows:

Forest District	*Forest*	*Block*	*Approval sought (hectares)*	*Approval granted (hectares)*
Forestry commission				
Easter Ross	Torrachilty	Strathrannoch	238	238
		Garbat	707	707
Dornoch	Shin	North Daichork	2,080	2,080
		Inveroykel	481	481
	Naver	Truderscaig	*821	784
		Rossal	375	375
		Badenloch II	25	25
		Badenloch III	41	41
		Cnoc dubh	*12	—
	Rumster	Warten	31	31
			4,811	4,762

*One of the conditions of clearance is that a barrier zone of 250 metres is left betwen infested areas and nearby sites of special scientific interest (SSSI). This accounts for the difference betwen the areas for which approval was sought and the areas for which approval was granted.

Forest District	*Estate*	*Block*	*Approval sought (hectares)*	*Approval granted (hectares)*
Private woodlands				
Dornoch	Gordonbush	Pollie Hill	250	250

Forest District	Estate	Block	Approval sought (hectares)	Approval granted (hectares)
		Skinsdale	45	45
Easter Ross	Scatwell	Compartment 103 and part 104	156	156
	Strathbran	Caiseachan	*†145	120
			596	571

* One of the conditions of clearance is that a barrier zone of 250 metres is left between infested areas and nearby sites of special scientific interest (SSSI). This accounts for the difference betwen the areas for which approval was sought and the areas for which approval was granted.
† Approximate.

Spraying commenced on Wednesday 5 June 1985 with the emergence of the caterpillars and, depending on weather conditions, is expected to continue for about 10 to 14 days.

The spraying is being carried out on Lodgepole pine to control Pine beauty moth. Aerial spraying of fenitrothion is the most effective control so far available. Spraying operations will be carried out at ultra low volume under the supervision of the Forestry commission's entomology branch by helicopter using an electronic track guidance system and sophisticated spraying techniques.

ENERGY

Power Stations (Safety Reviews)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is satisfied that Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate has completed the assessment of the 20 year long-term safety reviews of Bradwell, Berkeley and Hunterston A power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by the Health and Safety Commission that consideration by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate of the licensees' 20-year safety reviews of Bradwell, Berkeley and Hunterston A is in progress.

Offshore Supply Ships (North Sea)

Mr. Dover asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many offshore supply ships are working in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea; and how many of these are Norwegian.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: At 15 May 1985, 162 supply ships were working in the United Kingdom sector, of which 30 were Norwegian flag.

Mr. Dover asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many United Kingdom offshore supply ships are working in the Norwegian sector of the North sea; and what information he has as to the total number of supply ships in that area.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: There were 60 supply ships working in the Norwegian sector at 15 May 1985. Two were British flagged.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will state the amount of electricity generated in Wales by *(a)* coal-fired, *(b)* oil-fired, *(c)* nuclear, *(d)* hydro and *(e)* pumped storage power stations for each of the years 1979 to the last available figures, stating whether such figures relate to full calendar or financial years.

Mr. Goodlad: This is a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I shall ask the chairman to write to my hon. Friend.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many trainees are on the youth training scheme; and what percentage this represents of the relevant age group.

Mr. Peter Morrison: At the end of April 1985 there were 259,500 young people on the youth training scheme, most of whom were aged 16 or 17. It is estimated that about 30 per cent. of all 16-year-olds and about 5 per cent. of all 17-year-olds in Great Britain were on the scheme.

Mercury

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Employment what findings have been produced by Health and Safety Executive inspectors revealing contraventions of guidelines to employers who use mercury, in particular regarding the frequency of urine samples taken from workers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information is not available in the form requested.

Nuclear Installation Inspectorate

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the numbers employed in the nuclear regulatory work force per reactor in terms of persons per unit in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, France, Japan, Sweden and the Federal Republic of Germany for the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are 41 operational reactors in the United Kingdom on sites licensed by the nuclear installations inspectorate. There are at present some 150 staff in the inspectorate; other staff of the Health and Safety Executive also have responsibility for certain matters at nuclear sites. Comparable information on other countries is not available.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he is satisfied that the current level of staff of Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate is adequate to enable the inspectorate to discharge its functions properly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The nuclear installations inspectorate is adequately staffed.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to recruit further inspectors to Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate; how many posts are currently vacant; how many applications for those posts have been received; how many offers of employment have been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Three posts out of the planned level of 102 for 1985-86 are currently vacant in the inspectorate. A recruitment campaign which it is hoped will at least fill these posts and replace likely retirements over the next 12 months is now in progress: 152 applications have been considered and 55 candidates interviewed. Offers of employment have not yet been made.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated manpower plan for Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate as at 1 July; how many staff he expects to have in post at that date; whether this includes staff transferred from other parts of the Health and Safety Executive into the new policy unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There should be some 160 staff in post in the nucler installation inspectorate on 1 July. This includes staff transferred from other parts of the inspectorate and elsewhere in the Health and Safety Executive to form the London-based policy branch. There are three vacant inspector posts which should be filled later in the year.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs will be created in Bootle for local employeres as a result of the dispersal of Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate; and what is the estimated demand for labour from amongst the relatives of Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate inspectors on their dispersal.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is expected that there will be some 15 clerical and typing vacancies to be filled by local recruitment on Merseyside when the nuclear installations inspectorate disperses to Merseyside. It is not possible to assess the other effects on the local labour market, such as demand for jobs from relatives of inspectors.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply of 8 May, *Official Report*, column *434*, what steps he is taking to ensure that there will be no fall in standards consequent upon the move of Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate to Bootle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Health and Safety Commission is determined to ensure that there will be no fall in standards resulting from Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate's move to Bootle.

The Health and Safety Executive is taking steps to minimise disruption when the nuclear installations inspectorate is dispersed. Action already taken or in progress includes:

personnel management initiatives aimed at identifying and solving the problems faced by individuals;
improving communications facilities between HSE's London and Bootle offices;
formation of the inspectorate's policy branch which will remain in London;
deferment for one year of dispersal of the inspectorate's branch dealing with Sizewell;
continuing the drive to recruit more inspectors.

Health and Safety Executive Staff (Dispersal)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Employment pursuant to his answer of 8 May, *Official Report*, column *433*, why it is not possible to estimate the total costs of dispersal of the Health and Safety Executive staff to Merseyside, nor to estimate separately that of Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Figures for many dispersal-related costs—for example, accommodation, travel and subsistence, recruitment, staff training, post and telecommunications — would involve making assumptions, for which there could be no proper basis, about what these costs would have been if all Health and Safety Executive headquarters staff had stayed in London.

Employment (Accident Statistics)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the numbers killed or injured in each standard category of employment at their place of work in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 June 1985]: The available information is given in the following three tables.

TABLE 1

Fatal Injuries Arising at Work to Employees Reported to Enforcing Authorities

Order Group Number	*Standard Industrial Classification (68)*	**1979*	**1980*	*†1981*	*†1982*	*†1983*
I.	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	34	24	31	27	29
II.	Mining and Quarrying	60	63	61	70	46
III.	Food, Drink and Tobacco	16	14	8	10	23
IV.	Coal and Petroleum Products	6	6	3	3	1
V.	Chemical and Allied Industries	13	6	7	6	10
VI.	Metal Manufacture	34	21	19	27	13
VII.	Mechanical Engineering	16	19	10	18	16
VIII.	Instrument Engineering	—	1	—	—	—
IX.	Electrical Engineering	3	2	1	8	3
X.	Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering	10	8	13	8	4
XI.	Vehicles	4	11	5	5	8
XII.	Metal Goods not elsewhere specified	7	12	11	10	3
XIII.	Textiles	4	2	6	6	5

Order Group Number	Standard Industrial Classification (68)	*1979	*1980	†1981	†1982	†1983
XIV.	Leather, Leather Goods & Fur	—	—	—	—	—
XV.	Clothing and Footwear	1	—	2	1	5
XVI.	Bricks, Pottery, Glass, Cement etc.	10	6	5	11	4
XVII.	Timber, Furniture etc.	5	4	6	6	6
XVIII.	Paper, Printing & Publishing	10	7	4	6	6
XIX.	Other Manufacturing Industries	8	4	9	2	4
III-XIX.	All Manufacturing Industries.	147	123	109	127	111
XX.	Construction	119	128	106	100	118
XXI.	Gas, Electricity and Water	‡	‡	7	15	5
XXII.	Transport & Communication	‡	‡	46	50	40
XXIII.	Distributive Trades	‡	‡	10	10	12
XXIV.	Insurance, Banking, Finance & Business Services	‡	‡	—	3	—
XXV.	Professional & Scientific Services	‡	‡	6	4	7
XXVI.	Miscellaneous Services	‡	‡	12	16	11
XXVII.	Public Administration & Defence	‡	‡	15	14	15
Unclassified ‖		132	102	46	32	48
Total	All Industries (Employees)	¶492	¶440	449	468	442
Total	All Industries (Self Employed)†	‡	‡	54	48	64

* Deaths, reported to enforcing authorities under the then existing legislation.

† Deaths reported to enforcing authorities under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR) which widen the coverage of reporting. These figures are not comparable with those for earlier. The self-employed were covered by NADOR (from 1981).

‡ Not available.

‖ Mainly local authorities (of which approximately 85 per cent. voluntarily reported accidents to HSE in 1981 and 1982) for which an industrial breakdown is not readily available.

¶ The total number of fatalities reported to HSC enforcement authorities for 1979 and 1980 were 615 and 579 respectively. The figures may include some non-employees.

TABLE 2

Major injuries to employees reported to enforcing authorities

Order group number	Standard Industrial Classification (68)	*Major injuries 1981	1982	1983
I	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	165	147	176
II	Mining and Quarrying	1,026	1,044	1,005
III	Food, Drink and Tobacco	495	530	519
IV	Coal and Petroleum Products	41	50	43
V	Chemicals and Allied Industries	312	332	375
VI	Metal Manufacture	539	470	477
VII	Mechanical Engineering	461	457	474
VIII	Instrument Engineering	33	31	34
IX	Electrical Engineering	167	180	220
X	Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering	192	148	107
XI	Vehicles	334	267	291
XII	Metal Goods not elsewhere specified	374	396	382
XIII	Textiles	176	198	208
XIV	Leather, Leather Goods and Fur	15	26	16
XV	Clothing and Footwear	51	35	44
XVI	Bricks, Pottery, Glass, Cement, etc.	198	229	219
XVII	Timber, Furniture, etc.	260	290	329
XVIII	Paper, Printing and Publishing	275	269	252
XIX	Other Manufacturing Industries	174	145	190
III-XIX	ALL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES	4,097	4,053	4,180
XX	Construction	1,690	1,950	2,169
XXI	Gas, Electricity and Water	181	169	154
XXII	Transport and Communication	564	523	565
XXIII	Distributive Trades	242	219	195
XXIV	Insurance, Banking, Finance and Business Services	14	9	20
XXV	Professional and Scientific Services	1,322	1,103	1,010
XXVI	Miscellaneous Services	538	516	506
XXVII	Public Administration and Defence	1,166	1,051	1,183
Unclassified†		1,310	1,491	1,175
TOTAL	ALL INDUSTRIES (EMPLOYEES)	12,315	12,275	12,338
TOTAL	ALL INDUSTRIES (SELF EMPLOYED)	91	127	112

* Under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR) which came into force in January 1981, a category "major injury" was defined according to a schedule.

† Mainly local authorities (of which approximately 85 per cent. voluntarily reported injuries to HSE) for which an industrial breakdown is not readily available.

*TABLE 3

All Injuries (including those resulting in more than 3 days absence from work) to employees reported to enforcing authorities

Order group number	*Standard Industrial Classification (68)*	*All Injuries**			
		†1979	†1980	‡1981	‡1982
I	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	4,100	4,200	8,172	7,382
II	Mining and Quarrying	43,100	38,500	44,344	38,351
III	Food, Drink and Tobacco	24,452	20,747	25,514	23,100
IV	Coal and Petroleum Products	1,589	1,266	1,139	971
V	Chemicals and Allied Industries	10,420	8,583	9,266	8,113
VI	Metal Manufacture	20,150	13,805	13,685	11,377
VII	Mechanical Engineering	20,646	16,598	19,178	17,049
VIII	Instrument Engineering	1,180	1,055	1,149	956
IX	Electrical Engineering	10,005	8,013	8,564	7,344
X	Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering	6,054	4,918	4,789	4,342
XI	Vehicles	16,310	13,676	13,509	11,124
XII	Metal Goods not elsewhere specified	13,678	10,357	13,369	12,217
XIII	Textiles	9,844	6,682	7,046	6,225
XIV	Leather, Leather Goods and Fur	607	429	598	515
XV	Clothing and Footwear	2,730	2,000	2,661	2,451
XVI	Bricks, Pottery, Glass, Cement etc.	9,071	7,095	8,233	7,049
XVII	Timber, Furniture etc.	6,252	5,058	8,578	7,686
XVIII	Paper, Printing and Publishing	8,874	7,444	8,044	6,836
XIX	Other Manufacturing Industries	7,228	5,827	6,632	6,041
III-XIX	All Manufacturing Industries	169,090	133,553	151,954	133,396
XX	Construction	32,563	30,146	45,868	41,112
XXI	Gas, Electricity and Water	¶	¶	8,637	8,065
XXII	Transport and Communication	¶	¶	20,549	18,296
XXIII	Distributive Trades	¶	¶	35,342	32,022
XXIV	Insurance, Banking, Finance and Business Services	¶	¶	2,728	2,381
XXV	Professional and Scientific Services	¶	¶	31,485	30,772
XXVI	Miscellaneous Services	¶	¶	29,697	27,144
XXVII	Public Administration and Defence	¶	¶	47,795	46,129
	Unclassified‖	50,747	47,301	8,221	4,731
	Total All Industries	299,600	253,700	434,792	389,781

* 1983 data for over 3 day injuries are not available as a result of changes to the industrial injury benefit scheme.

† 1979-80—restricted to injuries reported to enforcing authorities under the then existing legislation. The total number of spells of certified incapacity for work resulting in industrial injury benefit claims, for 1 June 1978 to 31 May 1979, and for 1 June 1979 to 31 May 1980 were 581,000 and 509,000 respectively (estimated) some road accidents are included in these figures, which are excluded from later years' figures.

‡ 1981-82—claims for industrial injury benefit, notified to HSE by DHSS under the requirements of the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR).

‖ Mainly local authorities for which an industrial breakdown is not readily available.

¶ Not available

HOME DEPARTMENT

Stonehenge

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from the chief constables of Wiltshire and Hampshire about recent police actions in the Stonehenge area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend has been kept fully informed by the police about these matters.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will establish an inquiry to investigate whether recent police action in the Stonehenge area was taken in accordance with the guidelines of the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. The operational deployment of his officers in such circumstances is a matter for each individual chief officer of police.

Sri Lankan Tamils

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the declaration by Amnesty International of 24 May, a copy of which has been sent to him, concerning the return of Tamils to Sri Lanka.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. and learned Friend has noted the statement of Amnesty International's position on this issue, but has nothing to add to his statements of 20 May, at column 27, and of 29 May.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what evidence was available to him before he made his statement to the House on 3 June about the incidence of the risk of persecution of Tamils in Sri Lanka and about the geographical distribution of that risk; and if he will make a statement;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, column *273*, on what factors he based his assessment that there is no reason to believe that Tamils returning to Sri Lanka face persecution.

Mr. Waddington: Our assessment of the risk to Tamils of persecution in Sri Lanka was based primarily on regular reports from our high commission at Colombo.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what basis he chose 20 May as the reference date for his change of policy towards the entry to the United Kingdom of Sri Lanka Tamils.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. and learned Friend had been planning for some time to make a statement about his policy towards Sri Lankan Tamils. The sharp increase in the number of Tamils arriving in the first part of May made it desirable to make a statement as soon as possible that month.

Drugs (Benzodiazepine Group)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the criteria used as a basis for the scheduling of drugs in the benzodiazepine group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Drugs are added to the list of controlled drugs in schedule 2 to the Misuse of drugs Act 1971:

(a) if they are being or appear to be likely to be misused in such a way as to have or be capable of having harmful effects sufficient to constitute a social problem; or

(b) in pursuance of any treaty, convention, or other agreement or arrangement to which the United Kingdom is a party.

No amendment to the list of controlled drugs can be proposed without prior consultation with the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

The council considered in 1980-81 whether control of benzodiazepines under the Misuse of Drugs Act was justified, and declined to make any recommendation. However in February 1984, 33 benzodiazepines were added to schedule 4 of the United Nations convention on psychotropic substances 1971. The Government intend to ratify that convention and we will shortly be considering, following consultation with interested bodies and with the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, how those drugs should be scheduled under the misuse of drugs legislation to enable us to meet our future convention obligations.

Civil Defence

Mr. Neil Thorne asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further guidance is being provided to help local authorities carry out their functions under the 1983 civil defence regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: We have now issued the new consolidated "Emergency Planning Guidance to Local Authorities." This updates, expands and replaces emergency services (ES) circulars issued by the Home Office to local authorities before 1985. Similar revised and updated guidance has been issued to the police and fire services. This guidance is supplemented by a technical handbook "Communal Shelters," designed to assist local authorities in identifying buildings and other structures suitable for use as civil defence shelters for the public. The report of the Home Office working party on standardisation of training of civil defence volunteers has also been sent to local authorities for their guidance.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has issued equivalent emergency planning guidance to Scottish authorities.

We have also published a revised edition of the information booklet "UKWMO" describing the workings of the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation; and the report of the Home Office working party on the scientific basis for the development of guidance and operational procedure for living under fallout conditions.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has today published "Civil Defence and the Farmer" and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Health and Social Security and for Scotland are seeking comments from health authorities and health boards and other interests on a draft document on civil defence planning in the Health Service.

Copies of all these publications have been placed in the Library.

Coal Industry Dispute

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any information relating to striking miners was passed from the police to the National Coal Board.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 April 1985, c. *598*]: I understand from the chief constables concerned in England and Wales that no personal information about striking miners was passed to the National Coal Board by the police. However, certain information relating to offences committed in connection with the dispute was given to the board in cases where the board was the complainant. This information was limited to that normally disclosed to complainants, that is, whether the offence had been detected and, if so, the number of persons involved.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Fertility Clinics

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to fund fertility clinics on the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Infertility treatment is available in the National Health Service as part of consultant gynaecological services. It is for individual health authorities to decide the level and kind of provision in the light of local needs.

Population Statistics

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *162*, of his latest estimate of the numbers of single men and women, how many and what percentage of the men and of the women, respectively, are widowers and widows; and how many and what percentage of those who are and who are not widows and widowers, respectively, he estimates are single-parent families or otherwise have the care of children.

Mr. John Patten: My reply on 15 May to the hon. member referred only to those single persons who had never been married and therefore the information requested in his current question is not available. However, the information given in the table may be of interest.

Estimated resident population aged 16 and over in the United Kingdom: 30 June 1983

Marital Status	*Numbers*
Males	21,230,000
Single (Never married)	6,170,000
Married	13,530,000
Divorced	770,000
Widowed	760,000
Females	23,070,000
Single (Never married)	5,090,000
Married	13,630,000
Divorced	1,050,000
Widowed	3,300,000

St. Nicholas Hospital, Plumstead

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken or plans to take to resolve the disagreement between the Greenwich and Bexley health authorities over the use of any financial savings resulting from the proposed closure of St. Nicholas hospital, Plumstead.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This is a matter for the South-East Thames regional health authority.

Leukaemia

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) on 30 January, *Official Report*, column *224*, if he will indicate the relationship between the age profile of any given locality and the incidence of leukaemia therein.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My reply to the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) on 30 January set out the age and sex specific registration rates per 100,000 population in England and Wales 1980. These rates show marked variation over the complete age range with very high rates in the elderly, slightly higher rates in children than in young adults, and higher rates for males than females.

The national scheme of cancer registration aims to record each new cancer occurring in the population. If the data from the scheme were completely accurate, the registration statistics would exactly represent the incidence of cancer in the population.

Stillbirths (Research)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make resources available to medical schools which wish to conduct research into the correlation between the numbers of women working in the leather industry and the incidence of stillbirths and births of children with deformities.

Mr. John Patten: Medical schools are allocated funds for teaching and research on the advice of the University Grants Committee which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

We in this Department have received no approach from any medical school wishing to conduct this kind of research. Applications for financial support from individual researchers will always receive the most careful consideration.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will update the table of estimated gains and losses in paragraph 3.32 of the housing benefit review report (Cmnd. 9520), to take account of his proposals for a capital cut-off for housing benefit claims, for claimants to pay 20 per cent. of rates costs, and for £500 million in savings; and if he will similarly update the figures in paragraph 3.31 for the number who will lose rates and rent help altogether.

Mr. Newton: The Green Paper seeks comments on the proposed new structure of social security. Until that is settled it would not be sensible to attempt to provide a detailed analysis of the impact of the changes. That must await decision about the benefit rates to be adopted in April 1987.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the assumed income support level announced in his Green Paper, from which a 70 per cent. taper would achieve his projected savings in housing benefit of £500 million;

(2) what assumptions he made in calculating the projected savings in housing benefit of £500 million of the numbers of people in 1985-86 who will *(a)* receive less in housing benefit and *(b)* lose housing benefit help altogether.

Mr. Newton: The figure of £500 million gives a broad indication of the likely reduction in expenditure on housing benefit following the structural reform proposed in the Green Paper. Until that structure is finalised and the benefit rates and tapers to be adopted in April 1987 are decided, any analysis of the type requested would not be sensible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his figure of £500 million in savings from housing benefit under his new proposals announced in the Green Paper on the welfare state includes savings from the possible introduction of a requirement for households to pay 20 per cent. of their rates bills.

Mr. Newton: Yes.

Benefits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) which of the new benefits mentioned in his Green Paper on the welfare state will rise in line with inflation;

(2) what is the combined rate of income support and personal allowance under his Green Paper proposals that would be required in 1985-86 to compensate a single pensioner who lost *(a)* heating addition, *(b)* clothing and dietary addition and *(c)* the average single payment, assuming additional resources to cover 20 per cent. of rates bills;

(3) what is the combined rate of income support and personal allowance that would be required in 1985-86 to compensate an unemployed person who loses *(a)* heating

addition, *(b)* clothing and dietary addition and *(c)* the average single payment, assuming additional resources to cover 20 per cent. of rates bills;

(4) what is the combined rate of income support, personal allowance and family premium that would be required in 1985-86 to compensate *(a)* a single parent and *(b)* a married couple who lose (i) heating addition, (ii) clothing and dietary addition and (iii) the average single payment, assuming additional resources to cover 20 per cent. of rates bills.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his proposed level of income support and personal allowance at 1986-87 benefit rates for *(a)* pensioners, *(b)*sick and disabled, *(c)* families and *(d)* unemployed persons (i) under 25 years and (ii) over 25 years.

Mr. Newton: Decisions have not yet been taken about the rates of benefit to be adopted when the structural reforms to social security proposed in the Green Paper are implemented.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his proposals in the Green Paper on the welfare state assume any savings in the budget presently allocated to supplementary benefits; and if he will list the figures involved if the changes were implemented in *(a)* 1985-86 and *(b)* 1987-88.

Mr. Newton: The proposed changes in the main structure of supplementary benefit are not intended to reduce the overall level of help provided.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the level of expenditure on the National Health Service each year since 1955; what has been the real increase each year in terms of *(a)* the retail price index and *(b)* National Health Service pay and prices; and what was the level of National Health Service expenditure each year as a percentage of gross national product.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. *108*]: The table sets out total gross expenditure (current and capital) on the National Health Service in England for each year since 1971-72. Comparable expenditure figures are not available for earlier years. Percentage changes in real terms are measured by the gross domestic product deflator. As the hon. Member has specifically requested figures deflated by the retail price index, and by National Health Service pay and prices, these are also given, but we do not accept that either of these sets of figures is a sensible measure of real increases in expenditure.

	England gross expenditure (£ million cash)	*Percentage increase in real terms (GDP deflator)*	*Percentage increase deflated by the Retail Price Index*	*Percentage increase deflated by movements in NHS pay and prices*
1971-72	2,000	+3·6	+3·6	+3·6
1972-73	2,281	+5·6	+6·5	+5·1
1973-74	2,592	+5·9	+2·8	+3·5
1974-75	3,426	+10·6	+12·2	+1·2
1975-76	4,511	+5·0	+5·7	+2·6
1976-77	5,149	+0·7	−1·0	+1·1
1977-78	5,689	−2·8	−3·0	+0·9
1978-79	6,455	+2·5	+4·7	+2·3
1979-80	7,712	+2·3	+3·2	−0·1
1980-81	9,917	+8·4	+10·6	+1·2
1981-82	11,158	+2·3	+0·9	+3·3
1982-83	12,134	+1·9	+1·6	+1·2
1983-84	12,917	+2·0	+1·7	+1·4
1984-85	13,847	+2·6	+2·1	+1·1

The amount of a country's resources spent on health is conventionally measured in terms of its gross domestic product. Gross United Kingdom expenditure on the National Health Service as a proportion of United Kingdom GDP in the equivalent calendar year for which figures are available is as follows

	Per cent.
1971	4·1
1972	4·3
1973	4·2
1974	4·8
1975	5·1
1976	5·1
1977	4·9
1978	4·8
1979	4·8
1980	5·3
1981	5·5
1982	5·4
1983	5·6

None of these figures measures the level of service delivered to patients. Recent increases in efficiency have added considerably to the resources available for health care. For example, health authorities put forward cost improvement programmes totalling £100 million in 1984-85 and further programmes amounting to about £150 million are planned for 1985-86.

Undernourishment

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are undernourished in England.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 June 1985]: Undernutrition is uncommon in England. It has been identified among the elderly, where is occurs almost exclusively in association with medical problems or conditions such as depression following bereavement, and among some immigrant groups.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Atlantic Salmon

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the Canadian authorities following the announcement of a ban on commercial fishing for Atlantic salmon in Canadian waters; and what consideration he is now giving to applying similar conservation measures to United Kingdom coastal fisheries.

Mr. MacGregor: The Canadian Minister of Fisheries an Oceans had discussions with senior officials on 13 May, in the absence of my right hon. Friend and myself in Brussels at an Agriculture Council meeting. These touched on salmon conservatin matters of mutual interest. I am not aware of any announcement of a ban on commercial fishing for Atlantic salmon in Canadian waters. I understand that the Canadian Government introduced greater restrictions on commerical fishing for salmon (including shorter seasons) in 1984 and the Canadian Minister recently announced that he is extending these to all the Maritime Provinces in 1985.

Fishing for Atlantic salmon in United Kingdom coastal waters is already subject to close restrictions and these are kept under review in the light of developments.

EC (Financial Guideline)

Mr. Deakins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how the European Economic Community financial guideline which applies to calendar years takes account of agricultural expenditure in agricultural marketing years; what mechanisms exist to apportion planned agricultural expenditure into calendar years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The financial guideline relates to expenditure under the Community budget, which operates on a calendar year basis. In drawing up its estimates of agricultural expenditure on this basis, the Commission takes account of many factors including the anticipated rate of payments, seasonal factors and the date on which the marketing year begins fo each commodity.

Dioxin

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the concentration of dioxin in 2,4,5-T and related compounds which is accepted as safe for general use in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Fenner: The current maximum permitted level of dioxin in 2,4,5-T is 0·01 mg/Kg. This is one part per 100 million, and is the minimum level determinable by current analytical techniques.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the proprietary preparations of 2,4,5-T and allied compounds in the United Kingdom which have *(a)* restricted use, and *(b)* unrestricted use.

Mrs. Fenner: Under the pesticides safety precautions scheme, all pesticides cleared for use in the United Kingdom have some restrictions placed on their use. The degree of restriction varies according to the toxicity of the formulated product. For example, dilute, less toxic products formulated for domestic use do not require the same safety precautions to be observed when handling the material as do the more concentrated products formulated for professional use.

The proprietary products listed are those containing 2,4,5-T which are cleared for use in the United Kingdom.

Ban-Dock
BH 2,4,5-T 500
Brushwood Emulsion
Econal
Farmon Brushwood Killer
Kilnet
Marks Brushwood Killer
Nettleban
Silvapron-T
Spontox
Synchemical New SBK Brushwood Killer
Synchemical Weed & Brush Killer
Trioxone 50
Unicrop Brushwood Killer
Unicrop Super Brushwood Killer
Vigon 5T

Aerial Spraying

Mr. Kennedy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) to what extent, in granting any recent approvals for use by the Forestry Commission of fenitrothion for blanket aerial spraying, his Department took account of the evidence available to the joint meeting on pesticides residues of the World Health Organisation concerning the veracity of tests conducted into the matter by Industrial Biotests of Chicago;

(2) if he will list the categories under which approval has been granted by his Department to the Forestry Commission for the use of fenitrothion for the purposes of blanket aerial spraying; if he will indicate the reasoning for the specific choice of category in each case; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what evidence is available to his Department concerning international research, particularly Canadian, into the suitability of fenitrothion for use in blanket aerial spraying; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what information he has as to which countries have banned the use of fenitrothion for the purposes of blanket aerial spraying and as to the reasons for such laws;

(5) on what basis his Department granted approval for use by the Forestry Commission of fenitrothion for the purposes of blanket aerial spraying.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 10 June 1985

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Local Government (Consultation)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is planning to make any changes to the way in which he consults local government following the judgment in R. *v.* Secretary of State for Social Services: ex parte AMA.

Mr. Jopling: The written judgment is not available and we would need to consider it thoroughly before commenting.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of the work of the Agricultural Development Advisory Service is currently devoted to *(a)* veterinary services, *(b)* agricultural advice and *(c)* scientific research; and what are the respective annual costs of each of these activities.

Mr. MacGregor: In 1984 the state veterinary service accounted for 31 per cent. of total ADAS manpower at an estimated cost of some £40 millions. Total resources provided by ADAS (including inputs from the state veterinary service) for agricultural advice were 30 per cent. of total manpower at an estimated cost of £39 millions and for research and development were 34 per cent. of total manpower at an estimated cost of £41 millions.

Food Labelling

Mr. Shersby asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations have taken place between him and the European Community Commission on the proposal for mandatory fat labelling; what consideration has been given by him and by the Commission to the labeiling of imported food when such labelling comes into force; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: A copy of the statement of my right hon. Friend of 12 March—at column *29*—was sent to the European Community Commission. Subsequently there have been informal discussions between my officials and Commission officials in Brussels. Since the present proposals would cover food imported from other Member States, this issue has been discussed but no final decisions have yet been made.

Mr. Wareing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to introduce a system of food labelling for the purpose of providing a guide for diabetics; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The Food Labelling Regulations 1984 already provide special conditions for the labelling of foods that are claimed as suitable for or specially made for diabetics. I have no plans to introduce a system of food labelling designed to provide a guide for diabetics on foods intended for the general population. But developments on the voluntary nutrition labelling of food are likely to be helpful.

Surplus Foodstuffs

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total square footage of warehouse or other storage facilities which has been commissioned by the intervention board for the storage of food surpluses; and what was the comparable amount of storage space commissioned or financed in each of the previous three years.

Mr. MacGregor: I regret that this information is not available since storage is measured by the quantities of stocks as given in my answer earlier today, and not by the square foot.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total sum which has been expended by the intervention board for the provision of storage accommodation and related facilities for the housing of food surpluses in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and what were the comparable totals in each of the previous three years.

Mr. MacGregor: Storage, handling and related costs were as follows:

	£ million
1980-81	14·1
1981-82	15·5
1982-83	25·9
1983-84	48·6

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total amount of cereals and other surplus foodstuffs, respectively, which are stored in public and private stores, respectively, on the most recent date for which figures are available; and what were the comparable totals in each of the previous three years.

Mr. MacGregor: Cereal and other intervention stocks on 31 May of each year were as follows:

million tonnes

Year	*Cereals*	*Other*
1982	0·2	0·1
1983	0·9	0·2
1984	0·2	0·3
1985	4·2	0·3

On 31 May of this year 0·4 million tonnes of cereals were held in Government-owned stores. Corresponding figures for previous years are not available and would be disproportionately costly to obtain. Other commodities are stored exclusively on commercial premises.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total sum which has been expended by the intervention board in providing subsidies for the export of surplus foodstuffs to non-European Economic Community countries in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and what amount of this total is recoverable from Common Market funds.

Mr. MacGregor: Net expenditure on refunds on exports of foodstuffs to third countries, including monetary compensatory amounts, in 1983-84 was £360 million, all of which was prefunded by the EAGGF.

Milk Quotas

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much quota has now been surrendered under the milk outgoers' scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 May 1985, c. *202*]: At 7 June, some 265 million litres of quota had been bought in under the outgoers scheme. Although we have now achieved the two principal objectives of the scheme — to help small producers (those with under 200,000 litres) and to make exceptional hardship awards in full for 1985-86 — we have not yet achieved our overall target of 289 million litres of outgoers' quota for England and Wales. We have decided therefore that the scheme should be re-opened to enable our target to be reached.

The scheme will also now be open to producers who were not themselves in milk production on 2 April 1984 but who have subsequently purchased land with quota and who do not wish to produce milk.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Member's Correspondence

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the letter dated 20 May from the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to the hon. Member for Yeovil.

Mr. Moore: No; but I am quite happy to place copies of the letter in the Library of the House, and this has been done.

PAYE

Mr. Lester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to put the pay-as-you-earn system on to a non-cumulative basis and subsequently to put national insurance contributions and pay-as-you-earn calculations into the same joint deduction tables.

Mr. Moore: The Green Paper on reform of personal taxation, to be published later this year, will discuss a range of possible developments including non-cumulation for PAYE and closer integration between the tax and social security systems.

EC (Grants)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total sum received from the European Economic Community in grants or other payments in the most recent year for which figures are available; and how much of this total was in respect of payments made to compensate for subsidies expended by the intervention board for the export of food to non-European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The most recent outturn for United Kingdom receipts from the European Economic Community in the calendar year 1984 was £2570 million. This figure includes £528 million for the United Kingdom's agreed refunds. The latest available information is that payments to the Intervention Board for export refunds on agricultural products exported to non-EEC countries during 1984 totalled 666 mecu, or about £390 million when converted at the average ecu/sterling exchange rate for 1984.

Financial Management Unit

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make available the final reports of the financial management unit.

Mr. Peter Rees: Yes. Copies of three reports, Policy Work and the Financial Managment Initiative, Resource allocation in Departments — Role of the Principal Finance Officer, and Top Management Systems Second Report, are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses. They are useful background documents for Members and others who have an interest in Civil Service management matters, and a number of copies can be made available on request.

The Government share the approach to policy management which is described in the report on policy work and the financial management initiative and will be considering further how best to take advantage of the useful ideas which are discussed in that report.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Heddle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the administrative costs in percentage terms of collecting value added tax on business of an annual turnover of *(a)* £25,000 and *(b)* £27,500.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer to his previous question on 24 May at column *561*.

ENERGY

Acid Deposition

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans his Department has to consult non-governmental organisations with expertise in nature conservation and environmental protection about the effects of acid deposition and the environmental responsibilities of the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Goodlad: Policy responsibility for nature conservation and environmental protection rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Kleinwort, Benson (Sale of British Gas)

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Energy if Kleinwort Benson, in its rôle as merchant bankers advising the Government on the sale of British Gas, will be permitted to allow its employees to deal in the shares.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: N M Rothschilds & Sons Limited, which has been appointed as the Government's merchant bank adviser on the sale of British Gas, has already decided not to allow its employees to apply for British Gas shares.

North Sea (Supply Ships)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many Norwegian supply ships are operating in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea oil and gas fields; and how many United Kingdom vessels are operating in the Norwegian sector.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: At the 15 May 1985, there were 30 Norwegian flag vessels on charter in the United Kingdom sector. Two British-flagged supply vessels were operating in the Norwegian sector.

Plutonium

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy why it would not be in the national interest to disclose the total amount of plutonium, by isotopic composition, produced in all British magnox reactors owned by the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board since they were commissioned; and what advantage could be gained by other countries if this information were published.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the answer at columns *545-46* I gave on 25 January 1985, table 1, footnote (g).

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will reconcile the answers given on 2 December 1982, *Official Report*, columns *244-45*, and 1 April 1985, *Official Report*, column *465*, on the provision of plutonium production figures from civil reactors to the relevant safeguards authorities.

Mr. Goodlad: The amount of plutonium produced by a nuclear reactor in a particular period is not represented by the amount transferred from the reactor in that period. Some of the plutonium which is produced is retained within the reactor and in storage facilities at the power station. The figures which are reported to Euratom concern transfers and holdings.

As I said in my reply of 1 April, the tripartite (United Kingdom /Euratom/IAEA) safeguards agreement does not require CEGB plutonium production figures to be reported.

Civil Nuclear Materials (Safeguards)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the occasions when international nuclear safeguards inspectors have been denied access to British nuclear facilities when attempting to apply physical inspection safeguards to civil nuclear materials.

Mr. Goodlad: International nuclear safeguards inspectors have never been denied access to British nuclear facilities in the course of their visits to carry out safeguards inspections. They have been informed that access to certain areas within some facilities cannot be permitted on a regular basis for national security reasons.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

HMS Conqueror (Officer's Diary)

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Attorney-General if the investigation of possible offences in respect of a diary kept by an officer of HMS Conqueror has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I refer to the answer which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence gave the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 30 November. The Metropolitan police have submitted their report on this matter to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who has concluded that it is not possible for him to institute proceedings against any person on the evidence now available. It is also his view that there is insufficient prospect that further investigations would enable him to come to a different conclusion for it to be in the public interest for him to ask the police to pursue their inquiries any further. I agree with him in all respects.

Mr. John Tate

Mr. Dickens asked the Attorney-General if he will now prosecute Mr. John Tate for sexual offences with his step-daughter Tania, then aged under 12 years, between 1976 and 1978.

The Attorney-General: In November 1978 a report concerning such allegations but relating to incidents alleged to have occurred in about 1974 was submitted by the Devon and Cornwall constabulary to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who advised that proceedings should not be instituted. I am satisfied that that decision was correct.

International Find a Child Organisation

Mr. Dickens asked the Attorney-General if he will request the Charity Commissioners to institute an inquiry under section 6 of the Charities Act 1960 into the affairs of the International Find a Child Organisation registered in January; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I understand that the Charity Commissioners are already conducting their own inquiries into this matter. I have asked them to inform me of their conclusions and I will write to my hon. Friend when I have received their report.

Criminal Prosecutions

Mr. John Morris asked the Attorney-General how many criminal prosecutions have been initiated by the Director of Public Prosecutions in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions rarely exercises his power to institute criminal proceedings, and separate statistics are not collated for such cases. Where the DPP decides to assume responsibility for a prosecution, this is normally done after proceedings have been instituted by the police—whether on their own initiative or acting on advice from the director.

The following table sets out for each of the last five years the number of cases concluded in which the DPP assumed responsibility for the prosecution, together with the number of defendants and counts/charges preferred.

Year	Cases	Persons Prosecuted	Counts/ Charges
1980	1,340	3,944	6,909
1981	1,224	4,130	7,102
1982	1,307	3,631	6,398
1983	1,064	3,157	5,001
1984	999	2,676	3,740

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Gibraltar

42. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the recent visit to Gibraltar by the Minister for Overseas Development.

Mr. Raison: During my visit from 14-16 May 1985, I had discussions with the Governor, Gibraltar Ministers and members of the Opposition, the chamber of commerce and other Gibraltarians. I saw development projects which we are supporting. I was given an account of the Government of Gibraltar's future development plans and a preliminary assessment of the effect on the economy of restoring direct communications with Spain.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to provide further financial aid to the dependent territory of Gibraltar for the development of tourism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: The bulk of our present development aid grant of £13 million is being spent on infrastructural projects which assist the tourist industry. Within the remaining uncommitted balance of £521,000, further requests for assistance for the development of tourism will be sympathetically considered.

Ethiopia

45. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the distribution of aid in Ethiopia.

Mr. Raison: A serious shortage of road transport continues to hamper the distribution of relief supplies in Ethiopia. The United Nations Co-ordinator recently estimated that only about 36 per cent. of the monthly food requirement was being distributed. In the northern provinces the continuing hostilities and the difficult terrain add to the problems. I have announced in reply to earlier questions an extension of the RAF airlift in Ethiopia to 30 September, £750,000 for land transportation, and a readiness to provide an additional 10,000 tonnes bilateral food aid.

Nicaragua

47. **Dame Judith Hart** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British aid to Nicaragua.

Mr. Raison: British aid to Nicaragua consists of a small number of scholarships in the United Kingdom; support for small development projects co-financed with British voluntary agencies; and assistance to Nicaraguan refugees and displaced persons through appeals by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

UN International Fund for Agricultural Development

49. **Mr. Stuart Holland** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he is now taking to extend the work of the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development.

Mr. Raison: We have made clear that we are prepared to contribute the same share of the second replenishment as we contributed to the first. The agreement of the United States is now needed before the replenishment can take place.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government expect to achieve the 0·7 per cent. gross national product target set by the United Nations for overseas aid.

Mr. Raison: The Government accept the 0·7 per cent. target in principle, but, like previous Administrations, have set no timetable for achieving it. Progress must depend upon developments in the economy and other claims on resources.

UNESCO

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects were discussed and agreed at the temporary committee of the executive board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation meeting between 16 and 22 April.

Mr. Raison: The committee discussed reforms in
- Publications and documentation
- Programme evaluation
- Personnel
- Public information
- Organisation of the work of the 23rd session of the general conference
- Decentralisation

and agreed a timetable for their implementation. It prepared a report inviting the executive board to take note of the plan and timetable. Copies of the report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is satisfied with progress towards clarifying the status of Britain's continued membership of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Mr. Raison: Our membership is valid until 31 December 1985. We shall then withdraw if we are not satisfied with the progress of the reforms for which we are working with other member states. We shall make a final review of membership after the UNESCO general conference in November.

West Bank and Gaza (Aid)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what amount of British aid will be provided, directly or indirectly, in the current financial year to assist the Palestinian residents of the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza; through which agencies this aid is being channelled; and what was the total sum for the last financial year.

Mr. Raison: The aid provision for the current financial year is expected to be as follows:

Agency	*£*
St. John of Jerusalem ophthalmic hospital	100,000
Co-operation for development	57,000
United Nations Association International Service	39,000
British Council	75,000
Not yet allocated	93,000
TOTAL	364,000

The equivalent figure for 1984-85 was £240,000.

In addition we provided £5 million in 1984-85, and are providing £5 million in 1985-86, to the core budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA). In 1984, 27 per cent. of UNWRA's budget was devoted to the provision of amenities for Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza.

The European Community also provides humanitarian aid to Palestinians through UNWRA in the form of food aid and assistance to educational projects. (The community contribution to UNWRA was £16·5 million (United Kingdom share £3·6 million) in 1984 and will be £21·3 million (United Kingdom share £4·9 million) in 1985.) Some of this is used in the West Bank and Gaza. In addition the community assists the Arab populations of the West Bank and Gaza through its programme for non-governmental organisations, through small-scale rural development projects and by providing scholarships to Palestinian students. These programmes are the responsibility of the Commission and no figures are yet available for 1984 or 1985.

Organisation of East Caribbean States

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements have been made for him to meet the Ministers of the Organisation of East Caribbean States to review the United Kingdom aid programme; and whether he will seek the views of the Foreign Affairs Committee prior to the meeting.

Mr. Raison: No such arrangements have been made, although I understand that a request for such a meeting is being prepared by the secretariat of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. I will keep the Foreign Affairs Committee informed of developments.

I expect to meet some OECS Ministers in Washington on 17 June, where I shall be leading the United Kingdom delegation on the first day of the seventh meeting of the Caribbean Group for co-operation in economic development.

PRIME MINISTER

EC Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied that the European Economic Community budget for 1985 meets the criteria which Her Majesty's Government set in securing agreements to financial discipline at the Fontainebleau summit meeting in 1984; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The decisions taken by the Council in respect of the 1985 budget have been fully consistent with the agreements reached at Fontainebleau.

Midwives (Pay and Conditions)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Prime Minister if she will meet representatives of the Royal College of Midwives to discuss their pay and conditions.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to increase the pay of the midwifery profession in line with the recommendation of the review body and without reductions in expenditure elsewhere in the National Health Service.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) on 6 June at columns *194-96*.

Crime Prevention

Dr. Twinn asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination between the Home Office and other Departments on crime prevention.

The Prime Minister: Co-ordination between the Home Office and other Government Departments on crime prevention was given a fresh impetus through an interdepartmental group established in 1982 at permanent secretary level. Since 1982, the Home Office Standing Committee on Crime Prevention (now the Standing Conference on Crime Prevention) has included representatives of other Government Departments. The Home Office Crime Prevention Unit, established in November 1983, has regard to the interests of other Government Departments as well as the police and local authorities in developing specific crime prevention initiatives.

In January 1984 a joint departmental circular to chief executives of local authorities and chief constables encouraged co-ordinated inter-agency crime prevention initiatives at local level.

Portsmouth Health Authority

Mr. Dobson asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, columns 273-74, if she will make a statement about the approach made to Portsmouth health authority some two years ago by an official of the Department of Health and Social Security in regard to the contracting out of the managment of a National Health Service hospital to a private company; and if she will list any other centrally promoted schemes of this type instigated since May 1979.

The Prime Minister: There were some discussions between officials of the Department of Health and Social Security and the administrator of Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health authority in 1983 about the possibility of a private company managing one of the authority's hospitals. It was decided not to proceed.

There was nothing unusual about these discussions, which arose as a result of the close interest of Ministers in examining possible options and alternative ways in which the management of NHS hospitals might be improved.

Mr. John Smith (Meeting)

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent meeting with Mr. John Smith, chairman of Liverpool Football Club.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement that I made to the House on 3 June at columns 21-33.

Average Earnings

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Prime Minister what were the net average earnings for each of Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales for each of the last five years, and in each quarter since January 1984.

The Prime Minister: The information in the following table is based on estimates of weekly earnings for men aged 21 and over in full time work with pay unaffected by absence. Estimates are based on information from the new earnings surveys in April each year.

Income tax rates and allowances are those for the financial year immediately following. The figures are for a married man who is assumed to have no reliefs or allowances other than the married man's allowance. National Insurance contributions are at the contracted in rate.

Comparable information is not available on a quarterly basis and earnings data for April 1985 will not be available until October 1985.

Weekly earnings after national insurance and income tax

	Scotland	*England*	*Northern Ireland*	*Wales*
	£	£	£	£
April 1980	90·24	91·25	84·35	87·71
April 1981	99·53	100·15	93·11	94·98
April 1982	108·74	108·92	100·96	104·08
April 1983	118·30	118·67	108·17	111·47
April 1984	128·92	129·40	119·71	120·86

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Sumberg asked the Prime Minister if, when she next meets the President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, she will raise the case of Raoul Wallenberg; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no present plans to meet a senior member of the Soviet leadership. The office of President has not in fact been filled since Mr. Chernenko's death. It is not our practice to indicate in advance particular cases we may wish to raise with the Russians. However, representations by my hon. Friend and by many other hon. Members on a wide variety of cases are always borne in mind in the preparation of high-level contacts with the Soviet Union.

Air Services (Malaysia)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister (1) if she is satisfied with the progress made in implementing the agreement which she concluded with the Prime Minister of the Federated States of Malaya on 4 April on the provision of an additional flight per week between Kuala Lumpur and London; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she has received any indication from the Malaysian Government of their satisfaction with the implementation of the agreement which she concluded with their Prime Minister during her visit to that country in April; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. Dr. Mahathir and I agreed in principle to the additional frequency and that details would be discussed between the two sides. As a first step, British Airways put some detailed proposals to Malaysian Airline System during a meeting in Kuala Lumpur on 20-21 May. I understand that the Malaysian Government are now proposing talks between Governments.

International Find a Child Organisation

Mr. Dickens asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy that no Government assistance will be given to the publicity work of the International Find a Child Organisation while Mr. John Tate is paid as its leader.

The Prime Minister: The Government are not contemplating any grant of assistance to the International Find a Child Organisation for its publicity work.

Lobby Briefing

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister whether she consulted representatives of the Lobby before inviting the British Broadcasting Corporation cameras into the 10 Downing street briefing for editorial correspondents on Tuesday 21 May.

The Prime Minister: Yes, through my chief press secretary.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Young Offenders

51. **Mr. John Morris** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce legislation to consolidate the powers of the courts to sentence young offenders aged under 21 years.

Mr. Mellor: We have no present plans to do so.

ARWEN 37 Weapon

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Metropolitan police have any plans for the development or introduction of a fully automatic version of the ARWEN 37 weapon.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that he has no such plans.

Laboratories (Inspections)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inspectors regularly visit laboratories to ensure compliance with cruelty to animals legislation; and whether this is ever done on a spot check basis.

Mr. Mellor: There are 15 inspectors in post who all visit laboratories regularly and usually without prior notice.

Tamils

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received asking him to consider extending the periods of time for the receipt of representations on behalf of Tamils seeking refuge in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: We have received representations from four organisations asking for an extension of the period allowed to Members to make representations on Tamil cases. In addition a number of hon. Members have requested additional time to make representations in individual cases and we have been able to agree in each case.

A303 (Public Disturbance)

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ask the chief constable of Wiltshire for a report on the course of events leading up to the arrest of itinerants near Park House roundabout on the A303 and on the disorder which occurred on the evening of Saturday 1 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend has been kept fully informed by the chief constable of Wiltshire constabulary about these matters. Police officers under the chief constable's command, drawn from a number of surrounding forces, were seeking to prevent a breach of the peace in connection with injunctions obtained by the National Trust and others to prevent the use of land at Stonehenge by members of the peace convoy.

I understand from the chief constable that on 1 June a convey of vehicles, prevented by the police from approaching Stonehenge, entered a field and refused to withdraw from it. The police encountered resistance from certain members of the convoy who were circling the field in their vehicles and ignoring police instructions to stop. Some 550 arrests were made for public order and criminal offences as a result of the day's incident; while it would be inappropriate to comment further on individual cases which are sub judice, we recognise that the police have a difficult task in such circumstances.

I further understand that the police have since been taking steps to establish liaison with the peace convoy and to return to their owners vehicles which had earlier been seized in connection with criminal offences. Steps have also been taken to ensure that appropriate assistance is provided by Wiltshire social services department.

Political Refugees

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he intends to have with other Governments to ensure that every assistance is given to the United Kingdom in dealing with political refugees seeking entry to the United Kingdom in large numbers.

Mr. Waddington: We are in regular contact on these matters with other Western European countries and other countries with similar concerns and with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We do not believe that a separate initiative is called for in present circumstances.

Petty Officer John Anthony Black

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will call for a report from the chief constable concerning the progress of police inquiries in the United Kingdom into the unlawful killing of Petty Officer John Anthony Black in Sabinillas, Spain, on 26 December 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Hampshire constabulary that inquiries carried out at the request of Her Majesty's Coroner, to whom the police submitted their evidence at the inquest into Mr. Black's death held on 22 and 23 May 1985, are now complete. In the absence of information requested from Spain, no further police action is anticipated for the present.

Travel Documents (Withdrawal)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to withdraw travel documents from persons convicted of committing specified categories of offencess abroad or, in addition, at home for a specified period; and if he will introduce legislation to make it an offence for a person to apply for such documents in these circumstances.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

Illegal Animal Fights

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions are currently pending concerning alleged offences relating to organised fights between dogs and between dogs and cats; how many people are involved in each; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No information is collected centrally on the number of pending prosecutions, neither do records available to me distinguish offences of organising fights with dogs or cats from other offences under the Protection of Animals Act 1911.

DEFENCE

World War One (Cowardice Convictions)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what response he is making to the request to him by the conference of the Royal British Legion to reopen cases in which soldiers of world war one have been found guilty of cowardice;

(2) if he will assess modern medical evidence which could have a bearing on cases of soldiers convicted of cowardice in world war one.

Mr. Lee: A reply will be made to the Royal British Legion when the matter has been fully considered in the light of all factors, including modern medical evidence.

Tucano Aircraft

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he compared the Tucano and PC9 prices for the new RAF basic trainer, and what allowance was made in relation to the price of the Tucano to cover the costs associated with having the Jet Provost in service for longer than was originally planned.

Mr. Butler: The prices were compared and continuously reviewed throughout the period leading up to the announcement of our decision on 21 March 1985. As the Jet Provost is not required to remain in service for longer than originally planned as a result of the choice of the Tucano, no allowance was made in the price comparison.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Short's contract for the Tucano aircraft requires completion and delivery to full RAF specification standard of two aircraft in the autumn of 1986, 12 by mid-1987 and 24 by the end of 1987.

Mr. Butler: Yes.

Classified Documents (Disposal)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if investigations have now been completed into circumstances surrounding the discovery of classified defence documents relating to Aldermaston and the Tornado aircraft on a rubbish dump in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: Investigations into this incident have now been completed and a report is in preparation.

The restricted documents in question were all either printed on plastic paper or were microfiche. They were found by two boys at the premises of J. J. Maybanks Limited, which is contractor to HMSO for the disposal of restricted, "in confidence" and unclassified paper waste. The company does not handle more highly classified material.

The investigation has indicated that the documents in question should not have been included in the material for disposal by Maybanks, since they were non-pulpable.

All Ministry of Defence staff are being reminded about the correct method of disposing of non-paper classified waste and of the need to take all possible steps to avoid a recurrence.

Exercise Brave Defender

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Greenham Common and Molesworth will be key points in the Brave Defender exercise.

Mr. Stanley: I will answer shortly.

Trident

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the full costs of *(a)* building the new plutonium factory at Aldermaston and *(b)* building the new prototype pressurised water reactor propulsion reactor at Dounreay are included in the previously announced cost of Trident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butler: No. Both of these facilities are required irrespective of the particular decision on Trident.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has sought, or received, any indication from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' authorities about United States proposals to move toward modernisation of chemical weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have been asked to reply.

Although the Soviet Union has a formidable chemical weapons offensive capability, its representatives at the conference on disarmament in Geneva have made clear their opposition to the United States' proposed chemical weapons modernisation programme.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Division Bells

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal who is responsible for the activation of the Division bells of the House.

Mr. Biffen: Division bells within the precincts of the House are activated by the Principal Doorkeeper on duty at the Door of the House, once a Division has been called in the Chamber.

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal who is responsible for the servicing of the Division bells of the House.

Mr. Biffen: Division bells within the precincts of the House are serviced by the communications manager and his staff. Tests on Division bells are carried out daily before the House sits.

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal who is responsible for reporting failures in the operation of the Division bells of the House.

Mr. Biffen: It is the responsibility of every individual to report a fault to any Division bell if this comes to his or her notice. The procedure for reporting such faults is clearly set out on every alternate page of the Palace of Westminster telephone directory. The Division bells are tested daily before the House sits.

Toilets

Mr. Corbett asked the Lord Privy Seal whether he will designate one of the toilets along the corridor leading to room G01 in the Norman Shaw South building for the use of ladies.

Mr. Biffen: I will ask the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee to examine this proposal.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gibraltar

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to provide the Gibraltar Government with financial aid to pay the Spanish workers who were employed in Gibraltar before the Spanish blockade the amounts they were due from Gibraltar's social insurance scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: This is currently the subject of discussion with the Gibraltar Government.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of his visit to Gibraltar on 7 and 8 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: This was my first visit to Gibraltar since becoming Foreign Secretary. I was glad to have the opportunity to see Gibraltar for myself and to discuss a wide range of issues with the people whom I met there.

I reiterated Her Majesty's Government's commitment to respect the freely and democratically expressed wishes of the people of Gibraltar. I was also heartened to hear about the Gibraltar Government's plans to diversify and

strengthen their economy and to develop practical co-operation with neighbouring Spain in a way which would be of benefit to both.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current state of negotiations at Geneva to try to obtain a comprehensive chemical weapons ban.

Mr. Luce: Progress during the spring session of the conference on disarmament has been slow. On 12 March, I tabled further proposals on monitoring arrangements for non-diversion of certain civil chemicals. Subsequently the United Kingdom delegation submitted proposals for an organisation to implement a chemical weapons convention. But key problems of verification remain unresolved. The conference on disarmament reconvenes on 11 June.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific details he has received from King Hussein about the reported willingness of the section of the Palestine Liberation Organisation headed by Yasser Arafat to accept United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338; and which Palestine Liberation Organisation leaders have been reported to him by United Kingdom ambassadors as having endorsed publicly the King's statement in Washington of 29 May.

Mr. Luce: King Hussein has confirmed that, as he stated in Washington he and the Palestine Liberation Organisation are ready to negotiate a peaceful settlement on the basis of pertinent United Nations resolutions, including Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. A PLO spokesman has announced to the press that Mr. Arafat supports the King's stand.

Petty Officer John Anthony Black

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will instruct Her Majesty's ambassador in Madrid to convey to the Spanish Government the findings of the coroner's court in Portsmouth on 23 May that Petty Officer John Anthony Black was unlawfully killed in Spain on 26 December 1983, and to request the Spanish authorities to pursue the case further, with a view to identifying and charging any person or persons responsible for his death.

Mr. Renton: We are at present waiting for a transcript of the inquest from the solicitors of the family of Petty Officer Black. Her Majesty's embassy in Madrid will be asked to draw to the attention of the Spanish authorities the verdict of the inquest, to ask for their co-operation in reviewing the investigations so far made and to consider what scope there may be for further inquiries into Petty Officer Black's death.

El Salvador

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has now received the report of the official observers to the recent elections in El Salvador; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: A copy of the report on the elections prepared by Her Majesty's ambassador to El Salvador during the course of his normal functions was placed in the Libraries of both Houses on 23 May.

El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what visits the United Kingdom military attaché to Mexico has paid to *(a)* El Salvador, *(b)* Honduras and *(c)* Guatemala since 1983; what was the purpose of each visit; and what was discussed.

Mr. Renton: The military attaché in Mexico City, who is also accredited to El Salvador and Honduras, has made the following visits since 1 January 1983.

El Salvador
14-19 March 1983
26 May-2 June 1983
24-29 October 1983
4-10 December 1983
20-28 January 1984
15-27 March 1984
5-10 April 1984
3-6 June 1984
8-19 October 1984
2-9 December 1984
18-23 February 1985
1-8 May 1985

Honduras
21-23 April 1983
2-8 June 1983
10-18 July 1983
22-23 July 1983
16-24 October 1983
15-19 November 1983
10-13 December 1983
28-31 January 1984
27 March-5 April 1984
15-26 June 1984
15-22 October 1984
9-12 December 1984
10-18 February 1985
11-18 April 1985

The visits are part of his normal functions.

We have no diplomatic or consular relations with Guatemala.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of documents that have been prepared by his Department for the preparatory committee meetings of the non-proliferation treaty review conference.

Mr. Luce: The preparatory committee, which has now completed its work, was concerned chiefly with procedural matters. The committee did not request the states parties to prepare documents for its meetings, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office did not therefore prepare any.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific actions have been taken by Britain in pursuit of its multilateral obligations under article VI of the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Luce: We actively participate in all major multilateral disarmament fora, including the Geneva conference on disarmament, the Stockholm conference on

disarmament in Europe, and the Vienna mutual and balanced force reductions talks. We also support the current arms control negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union whose objectives are wholly consistent with the obligations of article VI of the non-proliferation treaty, and have contributed fully to the NATO discussions which led to the withdrawal from Europe in 1980 of 1000 nuclear warheads and will result in the withdrawal of a further 1972 between 1983 and 1988.

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Sumburg asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the response from the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to representations made by his Department during the last five years about Mr. Raoul Wallenberg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I raised the case of Mr. Wallenberg with First Deputy Foreign Minister Kornienko in 1983 and in 1984. On the latter occasion he repeated the Soviet position as stated by Mr. Gromyko in 1957: that Mr. Wallenberg died of a heart attack in Lubianka prison in 1947. The case was also raised directly with the Russians by the United Kingdom delegation to the conference on security and co-operation in Europe follow-up meeting in Madrid in 1983, and most recently last month by our delegation to the Ottawa human rights' meeting.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Mr. William Macrae

Mr. McTaggart asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if the procurator fiscal at Inverness is conducting a full investigation into the circumstances of the death of the constituent of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central, William Macrae, of Balvicar Drive, Glasgow, fatally injured in an incident near Loch Loyne on 6 April; and if the results of his investigation will be made available to the next of kin.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The procurator fiscal at Inverness has been conducting an investigation into the circumstances of this death. I will write to the hon. Member.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Supplies (Disconnection)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in the *Official Report*, for each year since 1979, the numbers of households where water supplies have been disconnected, showing where possible the reasons for disconnection.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The information the hon. Member seeks in relation to disconnections due to non-payment of water charges is shown in the table. Information is not available in respect of disconnections for other reasons.

Water authority	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Northumbrian	131	80	43	65	186	164
North West	1,500	393	239	71	210	253
Severn Trent	1,500	730	2,342	55	739	940
Yorkshire	1	2	5	11	12	25
Anglian	313	950	966	290	161	266
Thames	3,400	4,109	3,195	1,102	1,794	992
Southern	—	—	—	—	—	250
Wessex	—	—	—	—	3	22
South West	20	12	20	81	65	169
Welsh	10	18	3	25	172	148
	6,883	6,294	6,813	1,700	3,342	3,229

Figures for 1979-80 to 1982-83 refer to unmeasured consumers. Those for 1983-84 to1984-85 also include some measured supplies. Comparable figures for the water companies are not available.

Consultative Council on Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in the *Official Report* the present constitution of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The Consultative Council on Local Government Finance has no fixed membership nor are there formal terms of reference. I chair the meetings, which are normally held on four occasions each year. Ministerial colleagues from other Government Departments and representatives from the local authority associations attend to discuss all financial matters of concern to central and local government. The usual representation of local authority elected members is as follows:

	Numbers
Association of County Councils	7
Association of Metropolitan Authorities	3
Association of District Councils	7
London Boroughs Association	2
Greater London council	1
Association of London Authorities	1

Local Authority Associations

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he currently fulfils his statutory obligations to consult the local authority associations.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: In accordance with the statutory requirements and by whatever method seems most appropriate.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied that the additional income received by the Ordnance Survey from the recent commercial exploration of its copyright material properly takes into account the capital value of the archive.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am satisfied that the income from the Ordnance Survey's recent commercial ventures adequately reflects the value of archival material used in them, whilst at the same time reducing the Ordnance Survey's call on Exchequer support.

Rates (Waltham Forest)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people pay the domestic rate in the London borough of Waltham Forest.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information on the number of ratepayers in each authority is not collected centrally. However, at the beginning of 1984-85, there were 84,500 domestic hereditaments in the London borough of Waltham Forest, and about 30,400 rate rebate recipients, only some of whom were in receipt of full rebates.

Commercial Premises (Change of Use)

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he proposes to make it easier for firms to change the use of commercial premises.

Mr. MacFarlane: Any change of use which is not material in planning terms, a use ancillary to the main use of a building, or any change of use falling within one of the classes of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1972, does not require a planning application.

Amendments to the General Development Order in 1981 permitted a number of further changes to use of commercial buildings without specific planning consent. I have also announced proposals, which would require legislation, to enable planning authorities to grant permissions which would allow for subsequent changes between different uses on a site.

Local Government (Consultation)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is planning to make any changes to the way in which he consults local government following the judgement in R. v Secretary of State for Social Services: ex parte AMA.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The written judgment is not yet available and we would need to consider it thoroughly before deciding whether any changes are needed in the existing procedures.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy not to place before Parliament a special development order for any site for radioactive waste storage until the conclusions are received from the Royal Commission on environmental pollution and the environment committee on radioactive waste storage and disposal.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. It is important that NIREX proceeds without delay with investigating possible sites for a less deep disposal facility for radioactive wastes and a special development order is required to enable it to do so. The reports of the Environment Committee and the Royal Commission will be available long before any decision is made by NIREX to submit a planning application for actual development of a facility.

Urban Aid Programme (London)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the cash allocations made under the urban aid programme for the London boroughs for the period 1983-84; to what extent these were taken up; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The allocations to local authorities in London, and the latest estimated outturns are as follows (all £m):

Partnerships	*Allocation*	*Estimated outturn**
Hackney	11·00	12·40
Islington	10·35	10·50
Lambeth	13·50	12·55
Docklands	8·00	6·40

Programmes	*Allocation*	*Estimated outturn**
Brent	1·58	1·58
Hammersmith and Fulham	5·63	5·43
Tower Hamlets	1·78	1·78
Wandsworth	1·60	1·74

Other Designated Districts†	*Allocation*
Ealing	1·22
Greenwich	0·80
Haringey	1·38
Lewisham	1·00
Newham	0·82
Southwark	0·82
Barking and Dagenham	0·04
Barnet	0·17
Bexley	0·04
Bromley	0·004
Camden	0·15
Croydon	0·08
Enfield	0·04
Harrow	0·02
Hounslow	0·34
Kensington & Chelsea	0·53
Merton	0·19
Redbridge	0·06
Sutton	0·02
Waltham Forest	0·31
Westminster	0·08
City of London	0·01
GLC	0·29
ILEA	0·24

* Includes additional allocatons made during the year.

† Individual outturns for other designated districts (ODDs) and the traditional urban programme (TUP) are not available; ODD figures include approvals made under TUP.

Water Rates

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what alterations he is considering to the system of water rates for charging for services provided by water authorities to domestic consumers.

Mr. Macfarlane: No changes in section 30 of the Water Act are under consideration. This section gives to water authorities the power to fix such charges as they see fit subject to its provisions. All authorities make available the option of a meter to domestic consumers as an alternative to charges based wholly or partly on rateable value. A joint study of the possible extension of domestic metering is in progress. In responding to the study's findings the Government will also take account of any relevant proposals emerging from the review of local government finance.

Nitrogen Oxide Emissions

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentages of nitrogen oxide emissions in the United Kingdom are calculated by his Department to have originated in oil refineries in each of the last 20 years for which figures are available; and what forecasts his Department has made of such emissions.

Mr. Waldegrave: The percentage of United Kingdom nitrogen oxide emissions originating from oil refineries were as follows:

Year	*Percentage*
1974	3
1975	2
1976	3
1977	2
1978	2
1979	2
1980	2
1981	2
1982	2
1983	2

These figures are available from my Department's Digest of Environment Protection and Water Statistics No. 7, 1984. Figures for earlier years are not available.

Specific forecasts of emission levels are not available, but I am not aware of any reason to expect that nitrogen oxide emissions from oil refineries will increase.

Hydrocarbon Emissions

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what distinction his Department makes between total hydrocarbon emissions including gas leakage, and that fraction of emissions considered to be reactive in giving rise to ozone in photochemical reactions; and if he will give figures for the emission of reactive hydrocarbons in each of the last 20 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Waldgegrave: Hydrocarbons emitted because of gas leakage are all essentially non-reactive. In 1983 (the latest year for which figures are available) these accounted for 64 per cent. of total emissions. Scientific knowledge about the types of hydrocarbons emitted from other sources, and their degree of reactivity in each case, is not sufficiently advanced to provide realistic estimates of the percentage of the remainder which give rise to ozone in photochemical reactions. Figures for total estimated hydrocarbon emissions, however, are published in my Department's Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics, No. 7, 1984.

Tenants Exchange Scheme

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list in the *Official Report* on a monthly basis the number of new registrations and the number of renewals of registration under the tenants exchange scheme during the year ended 31 March.

Sir George Young: Numbers of registrations and renewals under the tenants exchange scheme, in each month in the twelve months to 31 March 1985, are as follows:

	New Registrations	*Renewals*
1984		
April	1,819	*
May	2,416	*
June	3,660	1,210
July	3,733	1,671
August	3,653	1,715
September	4,501	1,852
October	3,097	1,460
November	2,911	608
December	2,408	1,395
1985		
January	2,067	138
February	3,042	2,509
March	4,313	1,945

*Records of renewals have only been kept since June 1984.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of the tenants exchange scheme to the Exchequer for the year ended 31 March.

Sir George Young: The cost to the Exchequer of running the tenants exchange scheme for the financial year 1984-85 was £150,102·93 inclusive of VAT.

Sulphur Emissions

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 23 May, *Official Report*, column *503*, when he expects the review of the method of calculation of sulphur emissions from oil refineries to be completed; and what plans there are to publish it.

Mr. Waldegrave: I expect the method of calculation to be reviewed in time for any revised factor to be used in calculation of sulphur dioxide emissions from oil refineries during 1984. This figure will be published in the 1986 edition of my Department's Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics. That publication will, as usual, carry an explanation of the method of calculation used.

Nitrogen Oxide and Hydrocarbon Emissions

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate what percentage of ozone formed by reaction between nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons in the United Kingdom is *(a)* due to vehicle emissions, *(b)* due to oil refinery emissions and *(c)* due to other emissions or natural sources.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The information on which to base such estimates is not available.

Water (Aluminium Levels)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 23 May, *Official*

Report, column *503*, if he will list those water supply zones in which aluminium levels in water supplies exceed the limit of 0·2 mg per litre on the basis of a three-monthly average, and give the maximum recorded values in each case.

Mr. Macfarlane: I do not have the detailed information about Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, or maximum recorded values. The water supply zones in England where aluminium levels currently exceed 0·2 mg per litre on a three-monthly average are as follows:

Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company
- Rochester, Northumberland
- West Woodburn, Ridsdale
- Otterburn
- Wark on Tyne and surrounding area
- Bellingham, Kielder area

Northumbrian water authority
- Tunstall

Severn-Trent water authority
- Parts of North Warwickshire, Coventry and Nuneaton
- Parts of Charnwood, Hinckley and Bosworth areas
- Part of Oswestry
- Part of Stroud district council area
- Areas supplied direct from Elan reservoirs aqueduct
- Parts of Birmingham and Solihull
- Smethwick industrial consumer

South West water authority
- Parishes of Seaton and Beer
- Areas supplied from Tottiford treatment works
- Areas supplied from Prewley treatment works
- Bideford
- College supply zone—Falmouth and Penrhyn
- Watercombe supply zone
- Higher parts of Penzance
- Launceston and Callington areas
- St. Keverne area
- Bodmin and Wadebridge areas
- Princetown
- Halsetown and part of St. Ives
- Chagford Crediton hamlets

North West water authority
- Southport
- Stockport
- Bolton
- Tameside metropolitan borough
- Oldham
- Parts of Carlisle
- Eden district
- Lancaster
- Parts of Ribble Valley district

Yorkshire water authority
- South East Sheffield
- Part of West Barnsley (2)
- Central Sheffield
- South West Sheffield
- Thornton pressure treatment works supply area
- North Sheffield
- South Barnsley
- Part of Wakefield
- Area east of Thirsk
- Area west of Harrogate
- Addingham
- Parts of Dewsbury and Huddersfield
- Rombalds area
- Part of North Bradford
- Parts of Dewsbury, Huddersfield and Wakefield
- Huddersfield/Holnbridge/Holmstyes area
- Parts of Huddersfield
- Rural area of Keighley
- Panorama treatment works supply area
- Reva treatment works supply area
- Parts of Huddersfield and surrounding area (3)
- Rural areas west and south of Halifax (2)
- Hebden Bridge
- Northern area of Halifax
- Halifax
- Skipton area
- Otley

Action is being taken to improve treatment in many of these areas.

Areas of Special Scientific Interest

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites of special scientific interest have been renotified since 1981; and how many remain to be renotified.

Mr. Waldegrave: Of the 4,085 sites previously notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the Nature Conservancy Council had renotified 1,476 under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as at 30 April 1985. A further 46 sites which have lost their special interest have been denotified. Approximately 2,500 sites remain to be renotified. By 30 April 1985 the Nature Conservancy Council had also notified 518 of 1,797 new sites identified as meriting SSSI status, thus leaving some 3,800 sites outstanding. For these, the NCC currently estimates that the renotification programme will have been substantially completed by the end of 1986.

London Borough of Hillingdon (Planning Appeal)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet in a position to determine the appeal by Milton Hutchings Ltd. and Costain Homes against the refusal of the London borough of Hillingdon to grant planning permission for development on Pield Heath nurseries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Macfarlane: I am still in the process of clarifying the issues raised in this complex matter. I cannot comment on those issues at this stage in the appeal process.

Local Government Reform (Residuary Bodies)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to identify suitable members of each residuary body; whether the posts will be advertised; and what salaries or fees will be paid.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) on 5 June, at columns *163-65*. The posts will be filled in accordance with the normal procedures for making appointments to statutory bodies. Remuneration will be on a similar basis to that for other broadly-analogous public body appointments.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what charges will be made upon the Contingencies Fund in connection with the setting up of the residuary bodies.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: A sum not exceeding the provision contained in Supply Estimates for 1985-86, class VIII, vote 5, subhead A2(8).

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of expenditure he envisages by the residuary bodies prior to their finally being established.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The residuary bodies cannot incur expenditure before they are formally established.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the identified office location of the London residuary body.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: From 1 April 1986 I expect this to be County hall, London SE1 7PB.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what salary or fee will be paid to Sir Arthur Godfrey Taylor as formal chairman of the London residuary body; and what expenses will be paid whilst he acts in an advisory capacity.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: These matters have yet to be decided. The fees or salaries paid to chairmen and members of residuary bodies will be made public in due course in accordance with usual practice.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what staff are being made available to the London residuary body; and what is the envisaged cost.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The London residuary body will be responsible for employing such staff as it needs in accordance with section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the total costs involved in changeovers in computer systems following abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Waldegrave: The question of costs is for successors and in particular the residuary body which we expect will take over much of the GLC's central computer facilities on abolition.

Greater London Council

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the Greater London council and Inner London education authority employees are not related to functions to be devolved to the London boroughs.

Mr. William Waldegrave: The proposed destination of GLC functions is given in the Local Government Bill. The present allocation of staff between these functions, including education is a matter for the GLC.

Asbestos

Mr. Heffer asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of asbestos cement products used in the United Kingdom is imported; and what are the equivalent figures for each year since 1975.

Sir George Young: The percentage of imported asbestos cement products used in the United Kingdom for each year since 1975 is as follows.

	Percentages
1975	10
1976	12
1977	9
1978	10
1979	13
1980	18
1981	20
1982	21
1983	32
1984	34

Although the percentage imported has increased over threefold since 1975, the total usage has fallen by some 25 per cent.

Acid Rain

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what moneys he has received from members of the public wishing to donate a pound to stop acid rain by desulphurising electricity power stations.

Mr. Waldegrave: To date, a total of £514 has been received.

Drainage (Householders' Liability)

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the operation of section 39(1)(*b*) of the Public Health Act 1936, whereby householders are liable for structural damage to their drainage connections under the public highways.

Mr. Macfarlane: I am aware that householders' responsibility for the maintenance of their drains sometimes causes difficulty. The problems are being examined in a review of water and sewerage law which the Department is carrying out and which we expect to be completed by the end of the year.

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assumptions he makes in setting the level of rate support grant about the extent to which local authorities are unable to recover the cost of drainage repairs works from householders who are not insured against or who are otherwise unable to meet the liability imposed upon them by section 39 (1)(*b*) of the Public Health Act 1936.

Mr. Waldegrave: Rate support grant is paid in support of local authority expenditure generally and cannot be attributed to individual services. The considerations taken into account in settling the level of this year's rate support grant are set out in The Rate Suppport Grant Report (England) 1985-86.

Small Businesses (Building Regulations)

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which representatives of small business interests were consulted before the proposed new building regulations were issued.

Sir George Young: Drafts of the regulations were circulated on three occasions in 1983 and 1984 to over 300 organisations representing a wide range of interests. These included the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses, the Council of Small Industries in Rural Areas and the CBI Small Firms Council. Following is a full list.

Building regulations consultation list

Aggregate Concrete Block Association
Aluminium Federation
Aluminium Window Association
Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
Anglian Standing Conference
Architects Registration Council of the United Kingdom
Architectural Aluminium Association
Architectural Association
Architectural Metalwork Association
Associated British Ports
Associated Master Plumbers and Domestic Engineers
Association of Ballrooms Limited
Association of British Chambers of Commerce

Association of British Manufacturers of Mineral Insulating Fibres
Association of British Roofing Felt Manufacturers Limited
Association of British Theatre Technicians
Association of Building Component Manufacturers Limited
Association to the Conservation of Energy
Association of Consultant Architects
Association of Consulting Engineers
Association of County Councils
Association of District Councils
Association of Fish Meal Manufacturers
Association of Independent Businesses
Association of Independent Cinemas
Association of Lightweight Aggregate Manufacturers
Association of London Authorities
Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Unvented Supply Systems Equipment
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Association of Municipal Engineers
Association of Structural Fire Protection Contractors and Manufacturers Limited
Association of Thermoplastic Domelight Manufacturers
Autoclaved Aerated Concrete Products Association Limited

Bituminous Roofing Council
The Brewers Society
Brick Development Association Limited
British Airports Authority
British Airways
British Automatic Sprinkler Association
British Bath Manufacturers Association
British Bingo Association
British Board of Agrement
British Broadcasting Corporation
British Ceramic Tile Council
British Ceramic Research Association
British Combustion Equipment Manufacturers Association
British Concrete Masonry Association
British Constructional Steelwork Association Limited
The British Decorators Association
British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers Association Limited
British Floor Covering Manufacturers Association
British Fishing Federation
British Gas Corporation
British Insurance Association
British Ironfounders Association
British Laminated Plastics Fabricators Association
British Retailers Association
British Non-Ferrous Metals Federation
British Paper and Board Industry Federation
British Parking Association
British Pest Control Association
British Plastics Federation
British Ports Association
British Precast Concrete Federation
British Property Federation
British Rigid Urethane Foam Manufacturers Association
British Railways Board
British Ready Mixed Concrete Association
British Reinforcement Manufacturers Association
British Standards Institution
British Steel Corporation
British Telecom
British Waterways Board
British Woodworking Federation
British Wood Preserving Association
Building Centre
Building Employers Confederation
Builders Merchants Federation
Building Regulations Liaison Group
Building Services Research and Information Association
Building Societies Association
Bye Laws Revision Committee

Cement Admixtures Association
Cement and Concrete Association
Cement Makers Federation
Central Electricity Generating Board
Ceramic Tile Council
Chartered Institution of Building Services
Chartered Institution of Building
Chemical Industries Association Limited
Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association
Chipboard Promotion Association Limited
The Churches Main Committee
CIA Fire Retardent Additives Working Group
Cinematograph Exhibitors Association
Civil Aviation Authority
CBI . . . Smaller Firms Councils
CBI . . . Building Regulations Working Party
CLASP Development Group
CLAW Development Group
Clay Pipe Development Association Limited
Cold Rolled Sections Association
The Cocoa, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance
Committee of Association of Specialist Engineering Contractors
Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of United Kingdom
Concrete Society
Confederation of Construction Specialists
Construction Industry Research and Information Association
Construction Surveyors Institute
Constructional Steel Research and Development Organisation
Consortium FW Method Building (MACE)
Consumers Association
Contract Flooring Association
Contractors Plant Association
Copper Cylinder and Boiler Manufacturers
Copper Tube Fittings Manufacturers Association
Co-operative Union Limited
CORGI
Council of British Ceramic Sanitary Ware Manufacturers
Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas
Country Landowners Association

Department of Architecture Liverpool Polytechnic
District Council Technical Association
District Planning Officers Society
District Surveyors Association
Domestic Oil Burning Equipment Testing Association Limited
Domestic Solid Fuel Appliances
Door and Shutter Manufacturers Association
Dry Lining and Partition Association Limited
Dry Material Cavity Insulation Council
Ductile Iron Pipe Association

The Electric Cable Makers Confederation
Electric Heating Bureau
Electrical Contractors Association
Electrical Electronic Telecommunication and Plumbing Union
Electricity Council
Engineering Equipment Users Association
Eurisol UK

Faculty of Architects and Surveyors
Faculty of Building
Farm Building Association
Farmers Union of Wales
FASS
Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors
Federation of Concrete Specialists
Federation of Epoxy Resin Formulators and Applicators
Federation of Industrial Development Authorities
Federation of Master Builders
Federation of Piling Specialists
Felt Roofing Contractors Advisory Board
Fellowship of Engineering, The
Fibre Building Board Federation
Fibre Building Board Development Organisation Limited
Fire Brigades Union
Fire Cement Manufacturers Association Ltd.
Fire Insurers Research and Testing Organisation
Fire Offices Committee
Fire Protection Association
Fire Service Technical College
Fisheries Organisation Society Limited

Flat Glass Manufacturers Association
Food and Drink Industries Council
Food Manufacturers Federation Inc.
Forestry Commission

Georgian Group
Glass and Glazing Federation
Greater London Building Surveyors Association
Greater London Council
Guernsey, States of
Guild of Surveyors
Gypsum Products Development Association

Health and Safety Executive
Heating and Ventilation Contractors Association and BRACA
House Builders Federation
Housing Centre Trust
Housing Corporation, The

Imperial College of Science and Technology
Incorporated Association of Architects and Surveyors
Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers
Independent Broadcasting Authority
Inner London Building Surveyors Association
Institute of Clerks of Works of Great Britain Incorporated
Institute of Housing
Institute of Administrative Management
Institute of Plumbing
Institute of Registered Architects
Institution of Building Control Officers Limited
Institution of Civil Engineers
Institution of Electrical Engineers
Institution of Environmental Health Officers
Institution of Fire Engineers
Institution of Gas Engineers
Institution of Mechanical Engineers
Institution of Public Health Engineers
Institution of Professional Civil Servants
Institution of Structural Engineers
Intumescent Fire Seals Association
Island Development Committee—Jersey

Leathercloth and Coated Fabrics Manufacturers Association
Lighting Industry Federation
Lightweight Aggregate Manufacturers Technical Committee
Liquefied Petroleum Gas Industry Technical Association (UK)
Liverpool Polytechnic—Department of Architecture
London Boroughs Association
London Transport Executive

Manufacturers Association, Radiators and Convectors
Mastic Asphalt Council and Employers Association Limited
Metal Roof Deck Association
Methodist Church, The
Metropolitan Police Office
Milk Marketing Board

National Association of Fire Officers
National Association of Licensed Bingo and Social Clubs
National Association of Lift Makers
National Association of Local Councils
National Association of Loft Insulation Contractors
National Association of Shopfitters
National Association of Plumbing and Heating and Mechanical Service Contractors
National Building and Allied Hardware Manufacturers Federation
National Cavity Insulation Association
National Chamber of Trade
National Clayware Federation
National Coal Board
National Consumers Council
National Council of Building Material Producers
National Council for Voluntary Services
National Farmers Union
National Federation of Clay Industries
National Federation of Consumer Groups
National Federation of Constructional Glass Associations
National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations
National Federation of Housing Association
National Federation of Master Steeplejacks and Lightning Conductor Engineers
National Federation of Painting and Decoration Contractors
National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses Limited
National Federation of Roofing Contractors
National Fireplace Council
National Freight Corporation
National Gas Consumers' Council
National Home Improvement Council
National House Building Council
National Housing and Town Planning Council
National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting
National Joint Council for the Building Industry
National and Local Government Officers Association
National Master Tile Fixers Association
National Society for Clean Air
National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers
Newcastle upon Tyne Polytechnic
New Towns Association
National Union of General and Municipal Workers

Patent Glazing Conference
Phenolic Foam Manufacturing Association
Paintmakers Association of GB Limited
Pitch Fibre Pipe Association
Portsmouth Polytechnic
Polytechnic of Central London
Polytechnic of North London
Post Office Headquarters
Prefabricated Building Manufacturers Association of GB Limited

Refractory Contractors Association
Registered Plumbers Association
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation
Royal Institute of British Architects
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Royal Society of Health
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
Royal Town Planning Institute
Rubber and Plastics Research Association

Sand and Gravel Association
Scola Central Development Group
Sealant Manufacturers Conference
Shop and Display Equipment Association
Society of Architectural and Associated Technicians
Society of British Gas Industries
Society of Chief Architects of Local Authorities
Society of Chief Building Regulation Officers
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
Solid Fuel Advisory Service
Solid Smokeless Fuels Federation
South London Consortium for LA Building Research and Development
Spiral Stair Manufacturers Association
STAMP
Steel Window Association
Stone Federation
Structural Insulation Association
Suspended Ceilings Association
Swedish Finnish Timber Council

Test Research and Inspection Services (International) Limited
Timber Research and Development Association
Timber Trade Federation of the UK
Trades Union Congress—Construction Industry Committee
Transport and General Workers Union
Trent Polytechnic
Trinity House

UK Association of Frozen Food Producers
UK AEA Harwell
UK Atomic Energy Authority
Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians
United Kingdom Particleboard Association
University of Bristol

Vitreous Enamel Development Council
Volume Housebuilders Study Group

Wales Council for the Disabled
Wallcovering Manufacturers Association of Gt. Britain Ltd.
Water Authorities Association
Water Companies Association
Water Research Centre
White Fish Authority
Wood Wool Slab Manufacturers Association
Warrington Research Centre

Yarsley Testing Laboratories
Youth Hostels Association (England and Wales)

Zinc and Lead Development Association

Rate Demands

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to use his new powers under section 14 of the Rates Act 1984 to prescribe the additional information to accompany rate demands.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department has today written to the local authority associations and other interested bodies about the proposed new rules governing rate demands and background information to accompany them.

The rules will require that local authorities break down rate demands to show how much is paid to the rating authority and how much to each major precepting authority. They also require information on local authorities' income and expenditure to be provided with the rate demand, or, in the case of ILEA, in notices to be served directly on the ratepayers.

The rules will apply to rates set for 1986-87 onwards.

London Docklands

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that once the figure for owner occupation within the London Docklands Development Corporation area reaches the average for Inner London, as noted in the London Docklands Development Corporation 1984 corporate plan, the remaining new housing in docklands will be predominately constructed for rent.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. *53*]: It is LDDC policy, as stated in its corporate plan, to bring the proportion of local housing that is owner occupied up to at least the average for Inner London. This is, however, a standard for comparison, not an upper limit. The proportion of owner occupation has risen from 5 per cent. when the corporation was established to 15 per cent. and it would be wrong to set an arbitrary limit on this rapid expansion.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Shipbuilders (Pension Scheme)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy on the proposal put forward by the British Shipbuilders' pension scheme at the end of 1984 for an industrywide pension scheme following privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: British Shipbuilders made a proposal on this subject to my Department earlier this year. The matter is still under consideration.

Consumer Protection Legislation

Mr. Lightbown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce a system of impact analysis reviews of all consumer protection legislation for which he is responsible.

Mr. Fletcher: Impact analysis is among the topics discussed in the recent report "Burdens on Business", which we are currently considering.

Consumer Safety (Compliance Costs)

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment has been made of the compliance costs to business of consumer safety legislation.

Mr. Fletcher: We assess the broad costs and benefits of consumer safety legislation whenever consideration is given to amending the legislation, introducing new regulations or reviewing the need for existing ones. In addition, the balance of compliance costs and benefits of consumer safety legislation in general was examined in the context of the recent "Burdens on Business" scrutiny. Following this scrutiny, we are now pressing ahead with greater use of cost benefit analysis in making and reviewing regulations.

British Telecom (Overseas Orders)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the report from the director general of OFTEL on his inquiry into the placing of orders with an overseas company by British Telecom will become available.

Mr. Butcher: This is a matter for the director general but I understand that he expects to publish the result of the investigation shortly.

Tropical Timber

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the anticipated annual budget of the headquarters of the organisation that will administer the agreement on tropical timber; and how this compares with the budgets of the inter-governmental commodity organisations located in London.

Mr. Trippier: The budget for the administrative expenses of the International Tropical Timber Organisation has yet to be determined by its council.

The budgets for the costs in 1985 of administrating the international commodity organisations already located in London are as follows:

Organisation	*Budget*
International Coffee Organisation	*3,465,000
International Cocoa Organisation	852,000
International Sugar Organisation	1,000,000
International Tin Council	1,000,000
International Wheat Council	880,000

* This budget has been converted from US dollars, to pounds sterling using an exchange rate of £1 = US$1·27.

The Department has no separate figures of headquarters' costs.

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what inducements are being offered by Her

Majesty's Government to locate the headquarters of the organisation that will administer the agreement on tropical timber in London;

(2) if he will list the information he has as to the countries that have offered to locate the headquarters of the organisation that will administer the agreement on tropical timber in their capital cities and as to the financial inducements they have offered and for how many years.

Mr. Trippier: Her Majesty's Government have pointed out the considerable advantages of London as a location for the headquarters of the International Tropical Timber Organisation. We have indicated that we would expect to be able to offer the organisation similar arrangements to those made for the other international commodity organisations which already have their headquarters in London, including relief from 80 per cent. of the rates.

I understand that the Governments of Belgium, France, Greece and Indonesia have also offered to accommodate the headquarters in their capital cities, with the following financial inducements:

- the French Government have offered to provide accommodation free of rent and rates for the duration of the agreement (5 years);
- the Greek Government have offered to provide accommodation for a nominal rent of one dollar per year for as long as the headquarters is in Athens;
- the Indonesian Government have offered free accommodation on a temporary and partial basis.

In addition:

- the Japanese Government have offered free accommodation in Yokohama city for as long as the headquarters is located there and to pay for its electricity, gas and water;
- the Government of the Netherlands have offered free accommodation in Amsterdam for a period to be agreed and to pay for certain operational expenses such as fixed telecommunication costs and the cost of office maintenance. The Netherlands Government are also considering a voluntary contribution to the organisation.

Novice Amateur Radio Licence

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has received proposals from the Radio Society of Great Britain for a new novice amateur licence.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 15 February at column *305*. Since then the only discussions between my Department and the Radio Society of Great Britain on licensing categories have been in respect of proposals very recently put forward by the society for an intermediate licence. These draft proposals envisage class B licensees operating Morse on certain HF frequencies after passing a 5 wpm Morse test. My Department is considering these proposals.

Mr. Barron asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce a new novice amateur radio licence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 30 January at column *217*.

Asbestos

Mr. Heffer asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the asbestos content, type and volume, of imported asbestos products.

Mr. Trippier: Information on the type and volume of imported asbestos products is broken down into HM Customs classifications is as shown, imports in each category for 1984 are given alongside.

	Customs classification	*Value (£ Sterling)*	*Weight (Kilos)*
Fabricated asbestos (for example, carded fibres, dyed fibres)	6813 1000	69,662	114,555
Articles of asbestos:			
Thread—steel-cored thread	6813 3300	—	—
other	6813 3500	212,067	115,500
Fabric	6813 3600	500,233	202,248
Other—for use in civil aircraft	6813 3800	49,435	901
Other—cords & string, whether or not plaited	6813 4200	27,267	12,363
paper, paperboard & felt of asbestos—with added rubber	6813 4400	1,217,016	1,178,709
without added rubber—mill board & paper in rolls, sheets or plates	6813 4610	844,398	1,696,244
other	6813 4699	180,361	161,832
Machinery & engine packings	6813 4910	222,692	45,351
Non-woven jointing sheets and rolls	6813 4920	217,025	120,19?
Other	6813 4999	819,572	595,45?
Mixtures with a basis of asbestos & mixtures with a basis of asbestos and magnesium carbonate, & articles of such mixtures:			
Mixtures	6813 5100	117,025	69,441
Articles	6813 5500	278,476	149,748

Mr. Heffer asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the countries of origin of imported asbestos cement products.

Mr. Channon: In 1984,* 95·8 per cent. by volume and 95·1 per cent by value of United Kingdom imports of articles of asbestos cement etc. originated from: Belgium-Luxembourg (58·2 per cent. and 56·0 per cent. respectively), France (13·2 per cent. and 13·6 per cent.), Irish Republic (12·8 per cent. and 15·9 per cent.) and Denmark (11·6 per cent. and 9·6 per cent.).

Source: data corresponding to SITC/R2 Item 661·83 — articles of asbestos cement, cellulose fibre cement and the like (the great bulk of which is believed to be of asbestos cement).

* 1984 figures are provisional

Information on the number of imported asbestos products, and the asbestos content is not available.

Mr. Heffer asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what controls are imposed to ensure that imported asbestos products comply with safety regulations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: The only regulations at present in force are the Asbestos Regulations 1969 which are designed to safeguard those who work with asbestos. It is this group of people which faces the most serious risk. The Asbestos Regulations are enforced by the Factory Inspectorate. In addition, we shall be putting to Parliament shortly regulations prohibiting altogether the supply of blue and brown asbestos and prescribing warning labelling for white asbestos and products containing it. The new regulations will be enforced by local authority trading standards officers.

The Secretary of State for Employment will be putting to Parliament regulations prohibiting the import of blue and brown asbestos, the supply of blue and brown asbestos to the work place, and the use of blue and brown asbestos in manufacturing. These latter new regulations will be enforced by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and the Factory Inspectorate. More generally, if we find that a product on sale to the public is unsafe, we can ban it under the Consumer Safety Act.

Pharmaceuticals (Patent Life)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to give effect to the proposals in early-day motion No. 514 concerning the extension of the patent life of pharmaceutical products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: There are no plans at present to give effect to the proposals in early-day motion No. 514. However the two matters raised in the motion are under review. On the question of licences of right, my Department and the Department of Health and Social Security are now considering representations from the pharmaceutical industry. On the question of patent life, I intend to seek the opinion of the Government's Standing Advisory Committee on Patents. To this end I have asked the pharmaceutical and agrochemical industries to submit discussion papers.

Domestic Insurance Policies

Mr. Butterfill asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what representations he has received about the public policy implications of the exclusion by many domestic insurance policies of cover in respect of the repair of damaged drainage runs between the curtilage of domestic premises and the main sewer, imposed upon householders by section 39(1)*(b)* of the Public Health Act 1936; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to introduce legislation to require all insurers of domestic property to provide appropriate cover for the liability for drainage repair imposed upon householders by the Public Health Act 1936.

Mr. Fletcher: I have received no representations, nor have I any plans for legislation as this is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Small Workshop Scheme

Mr. Bellingham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the review of the small workshop scheme.

Mr. Trippier: The review of the small workshop scheme has now been published. A copy has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

16 to 19-year-olds

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the age participation rate or index for 16 to 19-year-olds in full-time education whether in schools, sixth form colleges, tertiary colleges and non-advanced further education; and what information he has about comparable rates for each member state of the European Community, the United States of America and Japan.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information in all post-compulsory education is shown in the following table for 16 to 18-year-olds. Rates for part-time students are also shown where they are available as they form an important element of United Kingdom further education (including apprenticeships, YTS/YOPS and similar schemes).

*Participation in Education and Training of 16 to 18-year-olds**

	Full-time	*†Part-time*	*All education and training*
France (1981)	58	8	66
Germany (1981)	44	‡40	84
Italy (1981)	48	18	65
Japan‖¶ (1981)	69	3	73
Netherlands (1981)	70	‡8	79
United States of America¶ (1981)	79	—	79
Belgium (1982)	na	na	•73
Denmark (1980)	na	na	•72
Spain (1980)	na	na	•47
United Kingdom■ (1981)	32	32	63
(1983)	31	32	64

na = Not available.

* This age group, i.e. students between their 16th and 19th birthdays, has been used to enable United Kingdom figures to be compared with those for other countries.

† Including apprenticeships, YTS and similar schemes.

‡ Including compulsory part-time education for the youngest leavers.

‖ Estimated; excluding some 18 year olds in certain vocational training colleges.

¶ Including private sector higher education.

• Estimated; using OECD and SOEC data for individual ages.

■ Excluding private sector full-time further education estimated at 2 per cent. for 16 to 18's. Includes some evening students, allowing for overlap with other types of study. Includes in 1981, YOP, (7 per cent.) and in 1983, YTS, (10 per cent.)

Note: Figures for Ireland, Luxembourg and Greece are not available.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many 16 to 19-year-olds are in non-advanced further education; and what is the age participation rate or index;

(2) how many 16 to 19-year-olds are in full-time education in schools and sixth form colleges; and what is the age participation index or rate.

Sir Keith Joseph: The number and percentages of young people aged 16 and over but under 19 years in non-advanced further education or full-time education in schools (including independent) and sixth form colleges are as follows:

	1983-84		1984-85 (provisional)	
	Number (000s)	Age participation Rate (per cent.)	Number (000s)	Age participation Rate (per cent.)
Non-advanced Further Education*				
Full-time	279·1	12·0	266·0	11·6
Part-time†	272·0	11·7	286·0	12·5
Maintained schools and sixth form colleges‡	327·4	14·0	312·0	13·6
Independent schools	66·7	2·9	Not yet available	

* Includes tertiary colleges.
† Part-time day courses only.
‡ Includes a small number of 19-year-olds.

Teachers' Superannuation Working Party

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the present membership of the teachers' superannuation working party, indicating the bodies nominating each member, the chairman, and the organisation or individual responsible for convening meetings.

Mr. Dunn: The present membership is:

J. I. Langtry *(Chairman)*, Department of Education and Science
P. Ramsden, Department of Education and Science
F. M. Scott, Department of Education and Science
J. Barron, Scottish Office
T. W. Hewitson, Government Actuary's Department
S. A. Mercer, Association of County Councils
B. S. Russell, Association of County Councils
J. Stevenson, Association of County Councils
I. Ward, Association of County Councils
R. Allen, Association of Metropolitan Authorities
W. F. O'Bryan, Association of Metropolitan Authorities
R. J. Clelland, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
D. J. Brazier, Association of Agricultural Education Staffs
E. G. Beynon, Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association
Miss C. M. Jenkins, Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association
A. B. Cox, Association of Principals of Colleges
Dr. G. Talbot, Association of University Teachers
C. F. Hayes, National Association of Head Teachers
P. L. Scudamore, National Association of Head Teachers
D. Gilling-Smith, National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers
F. J. Howard, National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers
F. A. Smithers, National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers
G. Bryon, National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
J. P. Dawson, National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
P. Harrigan, National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
W. J. Richardson, National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
J. Steers, National Society for Art Education
G. B. Fawcett, National Union of Teachers
W. G. Green, National Union of Teachers
F. F. Jarvis, National Union of Teachers
N. M. Horne, National Union of Teachers
C. Morris, National Union of Teachers
K. Jones, National Union of Teachers
Miss F. M. Kirkby, Secondary Heads Association
R. Hodge, Educational Institute of Scotland
D. L. Fulton, Educational Institute of Scotland
J. D. Pollock, Educational Institute of Scotland
J. O'Neill, National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (Scotland)
D. Mckay, Federation of Associations of College Lecturers in Scotland
A. M. Lamont, Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association

The secretariat, provided by the Department of Education and Science, convene meetings at the request of members.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the responsibilities of the teachers' superannuation working party; and how frequently it meets.

Mr. Dunn: The teachers' superannuation working party has no formal terms of reference. The original purpose of the TSWP when set up in 1970 was to consider the relationship of the teachers superannuation scheme to the then proposed new state pension scheme. That purpose having been fulfilled, it has remained in being as a general consultative body on teachers superannuation. There have been 40 meetings since 1970 including two since 1983.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will review the membership of the teachers' superannuation working party to reflect changes in the membership of the teachers' associations.

Mr. Dunn: No. The teachers' superannuation working party was set up in 1970 by an initiative of the local authority associations as a body broadly representative of employer, employee and central Government interests. the teachers associations were asked by the local authority associations to nominate members. The balance of teacher representation has remained a matter for the teachers panel of the TSWP and my right hon. Friend does not propose to seek to change that position.

Education Act 1981

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities have yet to develop policies specifically to meet the new demands of the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Dunn: All local education authorities in England are now operating the procedures introduced by the Education Act 1981.

Religious Education

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied that sufficient religious education specialists are employed in secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: Responsibility for the recruitment and deployment of teaching staff rests with the local education authorities. My right hon. Friend has sought to ensure through the planning of intakes to initial training that there is an adequate supply of suitably-trained religious education specialists to meet the demands of schools; and he has no evidence to indicate that demand is not being

met. He has also given every encouragement to the employers to keep under review the match between the qualifications and deployment of teachers already in the schools so that provision may be made at an appropriate standard.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is deemed to be the minimum appropriate time to devote to religious education in fourth and fifth years of secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The content and duration of religious education are matters for local decision, in the light of the relevant statutory provisions and, where appropriate, the terms of the relevant agreed syllabus; the Department has not sought to issue guidance on the allocation of time to religious education.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied that enough time is allocated to religious education in composite courses.

Mr. Dunn: The organisation of religious education within the curriculum is a matter for individual schools to decide, in the light where appropriate of the terms of the relevant agreed syllabus. If religious education is provided as part of an interdisciplinary course it is important that the religious education component should be given an identifiable and explicit treatment.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, in view of Her Majesty's Inspectorate's recent report on religious education, what action he intends to take to ensure that all schools will now offer religious education in the fifth and fourth years to all pupils, in line with the requirements of the Education Act 1944.

Mr. Dunn: The Education Act 1944 requires religious instruction to be provided in every county school and every voluntary school, and specifies that religious instruction in county schools and, subject to the provisions of the Act, in controlled schools shall be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus which has been locally determined. The 1944 Act does not lay down a minimum scale of provision of religious education for pupils in particular school years.

We have made clear that we look to local education authorities to ensure that the statutory provisions are met; and we hope that parents who are concerned about religious education provided in a particular school will take the matter up with the school's head-teacher, and if necessary with the local education authority and ultimately with my right hon. Friend.

Polytechnic (Research Funds)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the 21 polytechnics to which he has allotted financial support for research purposes, the degree of this support to each polytechnic individually and the period of time over which it will last.

Sir Keith Joseph: The institutions (not all of them polytechnics) to which allocations specifically for research proposals have been made from the advanced further education pool for 1985-86, together with the allocation made to each, are as listed.

	£'000s
Central London polytechnic	150
Coventry polytechnic	150
Hatfield polytechnic	150
Kingston polytechnic	150
Leicester polytechnic	150
Liverpool polytechnic	150
Newcastle polytechnic	150
Plymouth polytechnic	150
Portsmouth polytechnic	150
South Bank polytechnic	150
Trent polytechnic	150
Brighton polytechnic	100
Camborne school of mines	100
Manchester polytechnic	100
Sheffield city polytechnic	100
Bristol polytechnic	75
City of London polytechnic	75
Lancashire polytechnic	75
Teesside polytechnic	75
Thames polytechnic	75
Wolverhampton polytechnic	75
TOTAL	2,500

The NAB has advised that allocations should be maintained at least at existing levels for three years in the first instance.

Science Education

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he is making to implement his policy regarding science education in terms of increasing the provision of bench space, scientific equipment and laboratory technicians in schools.

Mr. Dunn: It is for local education authorities and schools to consider the implications of the Government's policy statement on science education and to develop and implement their own policies accordingly, within the resources available to them. As the policy statement says, the first essential is to use those resources to the best possible effect, taking account of the impact of falling rolls in secondary schools.

Higher Education

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will explain the assumptions and methodology behind the table in annexe B of the Green Paper "The Development of Higher Education" in respect of the social rate of return on investment in higher education;

(2) whether the figures given in annexe B of the Green Paper "The Development of Higher Education" in respect of the social rate of return for investment in higher education represent the nominal or real rate of return.

Sir Keith Joseph: Calculations of the social rate of return assume that education can be viewed as a social investment, yielding benefits in terms of the increased productivity of an educated work-force from the outlay of resources devoted to tuition and any output lost because of the students' absence from the work-force. The rate of return is the implied yield (or internal rate of return) from this outlay. Since all the costs and benefits for the estimates published in the Green Paper are expressed in terms of the prices prevailing at a common date, the figures quoted represent real rates of return, and do not require adjustment for inflation.

Social rate of return estimates in relation to education usually assume that gross earnings are a suitable measure of productivity, and the DES analysis uses data from the general household survey to calculate the earnings differentials of graduates over non-graduates. This assumption has some weaknesses. Firstly, labour market distortions will cause earnings to diverge from productivity to some extent. Secondly, part of the increased productivity of a graduate may reflect factors other than the return to education, most notably innate ability. An attempt is made to meet this objection by using alternative assumptions as to the proportion of the earnings differential that is attributable to education rather than to other influences. Finally the present earnings differentials of past graduates may be a poor guide to the future earnings differentials of present graduates.

Despite limitations of this kind, which are acknowledged in the Green Paper, rate of return analysis does provide a framework within which data on the costs and benefits of higher education can be brought together and usefully summarized; and it can be used to highlight features and trends worthy of more detailed investigation.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department as to the number of graduations per member of staff in higher education in England and in competitor countries.

Sir Keith Joseph: Some figures have been put together in the following table, but they are not comparable between countries and I would advise against drawing any conclusions from them. Teaching staff for the United Kingdom are on a full-time equivalent basis but for other countries only total numbers are available (full-time and part-time). Furthermore, teaching staff in higher education divide their time between teaching and research, the extent of which varies considerably between countries.

Teachers/lecturers and graduations # gained in higher education, including postgraduates and sub-degrees*

Country	*Year*	*Teaching staff*	*Graduations*	*Graduations per teaching staff*
		000s	*000s*	
France†	1982	43	203	4·7
Germany	1981	177	204	1·2
Italy	1981	49	88	1·8
Japan‡‖	1981	221	580	2·6
United States‖	1979	⁽822	1,748	2·1
United Kingdom● basic■	1982	66	170	2·6
enhanced⋆	1982	66	218	3·3

* Teachers/lecturers—total numbers except for the United Kingdom which covers full-time university staff plus full-time equivalent staff in the public sector.
† Represents teaching staff in "L'enseignement Supérieur". Excludes establishments not run by the Ministry of Education.
‡ Includes correspondence courses.
‖ Includes private sector.
⁽ In 1980 there were 396 thousand full-time teaching staff.
● Excludes Open university.
■ Excludes students successfully completing courses leading to professional qualifications.
⋆ Includes a first estimate of successful completions of courses leading to professional sub-degree HE qualifications in public sector institutions.
The term 'graduations' refers to all those qualifying in Higher Education as is standard practice with international comparisons.
Sources: Department of Education and Science. UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1984. Répères et Références Statistiques, 1984.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department in respect of *(a)* the costs of producing a graduate and *(b)* the comparative advantage of higher education in the United Kingdom and the United Kingdom's competitors; and whether he will explain the assumptions behind any such comparisons as are available.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Department's estimates of the costs of producing a university graduate are published in table 3 of annex B of the Green Paper on the Development of Higher Education into the 1990s (Cmnd. 9524).

Comparable estimates for CNAA graduates cannot yet be provided, although table 4 of the Green Paper annex does provide some information on costs per student in the polytechnics. Further information on average course length and on wastage rates in the polytechnics would be required to derive measures of the cost per graduate. The Green Paper estimates are based on cost information provided by universities to the UGC and by polytechnics in the polytechnic finance officers group annual report. Information on average course length and wastage is derived from data provided by the University Statistical Record.

Comparsions between the United Kingdom and its competitors are problematical for various reasons including differences between the countries in the scope of their higher education systems, the entry requirements, the resources devoted to teaching as opposed to research, and the standard of qualification achieved.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the reduction in *(a)* the number and *(b)* the percentage of arts and humanities student places in higher education required to achieve a net increase in the output of science and engineering graduates of (i) 1 per cent. (ii) 100 and (iii) 1,000 assuming that student numbers and expenditure on higher education remain constant overall for *(x)* higher education as a whole, *(y)* polytechnics and *(z)* universities.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information requested is as follows:

Hypothetical estimated reduction in total number of arts and humanities places (1983-84 baseline)

		Universities (GB)	*Public sector higher education (GB)*	*All higher education (GB)*
To achieve a 1 per cent. rise in the output of science (excluding medicine) and engineering graduates	Nos. (000s)	1·38	0·670	2·05
	percentage	1·2	0·6	0·9
To achieve a 100 per cent. rise	Nos. (000s)	138	67	205
	percentage	118	56	86
To achieve a 1,000 per cent. rise	Nos. (000s)	1,382	667	2,049
	percentage	1,176	558	865

Notes:

Figures assume that the average recurrent cost of teaching provision in science (excluding medicine) and engineering is 40 per cent. greater than the cost of arts and humanities (ie all other subjects) provision in each sector. No allowance is made for any differences in completion or pass rates or in average course lengths between subject areas, nor for the transitional costs of switching provision between subject areas. The calculations take no account of future movements in graduate output already projected under present plans. The totals (third) column assumes equal proportional change in each sector.

Lower Attaining Pupils Programme

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children are currently involved in the lower attaining pupils programme; and what is the total cost of the programme broken down into a research component and expenditure in the schools.

Mr. Dunn: About 5,600 pupils are currently involved. The total cost of the programme is approximately £2·5 million per annum of which 75 per cent. is borne by the central Government and 25 per cent. by the local education authorities involved. Two of the projects are funded up to 50 per cent. by the European Community under its transition-to-work programme. An additional sum of £436,000 has been allocated within the Department's research budget for the evaluation of the programme by the National Foundation for Educational Research.

Student Grants

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the real value of the student grant in each year since 1979.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information requested is as follows:

	Ordinary maintenance grant (£) (outside London)	*Percentage value in real terms (September 1978 = 100)*
1978-79	1,100	100
1979-80	1,245	97
1980-81	1,430	96
1981-82	1,535	93
1982-83	1,595	90
1983-84	1,660	89
1984-85	1,775	91

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the real value of the student grant in 1966-67 compared to 1984-85.

Sir Keith Joseph: In terms of increases in retail prices, the real value of the student grant in 1966-67 was 11 per cent. above that for 1984-85. The rate of grant in 1984-85 includes the additional travel allowance of £50. If this were excluded, then the real value of the grant in 1966-67 would be 15 per cent. above that for 1984-85.

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether any changes will be made to the 1985-86 cash limits for his Department's votes.

Sir Keith Joseph: Subject to the approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the 1985-86 cash limit for class X, vote 9 (Research Councils etc: Economic and Social Research Council) will be increased by £74,000 from £23,593,000 to £23,667,000. This is to enable the Economic and Social Research Council to adminster from July 1985, the postgraduate studentships in housing management the introduction of which was announced by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Housing and Construction on 30 January 1985 at columns *178-79*. Offsetting this additional expenditure, the cash limit on class VIII, vote 5 has been reduced by £13,000 as announced on 5 June. I understand that the remaining £61,000 will be found from within my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment's housing, England programme and there is therefore no overall change to public expenditure.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many youth training scheme trainees in each of the modes were attending further education colleges in Great Britain, divided by *(a)* local education authority and *(b)* individual college establishment at the most recent date for which figures are available.

Sir Keith Joseph [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1985, c. *384*]: The following tables show *(a)* the numbers of students recorded as on YTS courses within FE establishments by LEA on 1 November 1983 and *(b)* the numbers of students recorded on YTS courses for those further education establishments with 50 or more such students. In each table the numbers are split into those on YTS mode A courses and those on YTS mode B courses.

(a) Students on YTS Courses by LEA November 1983

LEA	YTS Mode A	YTS Mode B	Total
England			
Greater London			
Barking	146	94	240
Barnet	78	21	99
Bexley	289	24	313
Brent	257	28	285
Bromley	0	23	23
Croydon	257	102	359
Ealing	219	0	219
Enfield	198	147	245
Haringey	142	55	197
Harrow	32	35	67
Havering	170	0	170
Hillingdon	14	16	30
Hounslow	116	0	116
Kingston-upon-Thames	194	0	194
Merton	68	38	106
Newham	259	0	259
Redbridge	277	20	297
Richmond-upon-Thames	0	155	155
Sutton	188	28	216
Waltham Forest	385	0	385
Total Outer London boroughs	3,289	786	3,975
ILEA	2,018	729	2,747
Total Greater London	5,307	1,515	6,722
Metropolitan Districts			
West Midlands			
Birmingham	2,628	268	2,896
Coventry	700	289	989
Dudley	330	186	486
Sandwell	798	247	1,045
Solihull	383	191	574
Walsall	271	631	902
Wolverhampton	613	539	1,152
Total	5,723	2,351	8,074
Merseyside			
Knowsley	0	612	612
Liverpool	1,685	1,335	3,020
St. Helens	733	424	1,157
Sefton	335	510	845
Wirral	3	0	3
Total	2,756	2,881	5,637
Greater Manchester			
Bolton	604	156	760
Bury	180	0	180
Manchester	1,268	650	1,918
Oldham	449	162	611
Rochdale	177	63	240
Salford	354	156	510
Stockport	752	54	806
Tameside	353	136	489
Trafford	418	166	584
Wigan	1,101	396	1,497
Total	5,656	1,939	7,595
South Yorkshire			
Barnsley	417	112	529
Doncaster	892	253	1,145
Rotherham	676	462	1,138
Sheffield	1,401	675	2,076
Total	3,386	1,502	4,888
West Yorkshire			
Bradford	113	298	411
Calderdale	159	179	338
Kirklees	512	110	622
Leeds	1,286	151	1,437
Wakefield	712	78	790
Total	2,782	816	3,598
Tyne and Wear			
Gateshead	77	250	327
Newcastle upon Tyne	789	56	845
North Tyneside	292	215	507
South Tyneside	486	371	857
Sunderland	449	381	830
Total	2,093	1,273	3,366
West Midlands	5,723	2,351	8,074
Merseyside	2,756	2,881	5,637
Greater Manchester	5,656	1,939	7,595
South Yorkshire	3,386	1,502	4,888
West Yorkshire	2,782	816	3,598
Tyne and Wear	2,093	1,273	3,366
Total Metropolitan districts	22,393	10,762	33,155
Non Metropolitan Counties			
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0
Avon	1,845	248	2,093
Bedfordshire	474	4	478
Berkshire	733	303	1,036
Buckinghamshire	281	140	421
Cambridgeshire	829	235	1,064
Cheshire	1,224	999	2,223
Cleveland	401	711	1,112
Cornwall	823	65	888
Cumbria	1,438	44	1,482
Derbyshire	2,851	559	3,410
Devon	1,521	219	1,740
Dorset	572	229	801
Durham	1,439	306	1,745
East Sussex	967	38	1,005
Essex	2,017	194	2,211
Gloucestershire	1,601	200	1,801
Hampshire	2,959	274	3,233
Hereford and Worcester	1,746	181	1,927
Hertfordshire	903	249	1,152
Humberside	1,876	1,349	3,225
Isle of Wight	490	0	490
Kent	2,311	263	2,574
Lancashire	2,442	720	3,162
Leicestershire	1,326	182	1,508
Lincolnshire	1,256	172	1,428
Norfolk	1,273	135	1,408
North Yorkshire	990	28	1,018
Northamptonshire	700	272	972

LEA	YTS Mode A	YTS Mode B	Total
Northumberland	320	107	427
Nottinghamshire	3,293	329	3,622
Oxfordshire	585	352	937
Salop	1,060	277	1,336
Somerset	1,038	342	1,380
Staffordshire	1,601	830	2,431
Suffolk	1,439	79	1,518
Surrey	731	174	905
Warwickshire	1,226	414	1,640
West Sussex	850	22	872
Wiltshire	1,039	218	1,257
Non Metropolitan Counties	50,470	11,463	61,932
Total England	78,172	23,640	101,812

(b) Students on YTS Courses by College: November 1983

	YTS Mode A	YTS Mode B	Total
Barking College of Technology	146	94	240
Barnet College	68	21	89
Erith College of Technology	289	24	313
Kilburn Polytechnic	69	0	69
Willesden College of Technology	188	28	216
Croydon college	257	102	359
Acton Technical College	176	0	176
Southgate Technical College	145	0	145
Edmonton College of Further Education	45	47	92
Tottenham College of Technology	97	0	97
Haringey College	45	55	100
Harrow College of Further Education	32	35	67
Havering Technical College	170	0	170
Hounslow Borough College	116	0	116
Kingston College of Further Education	194	0	194
Merton College	68	38	106
West Ham College	94	0	94
East Ham College of Technology	165	0	165
Redbridge Technical College	277	20	297
Richmond Upon Thames College	0	155	155
Carshalton College of Further Education	157	0	157
Sutton College of Liberal Arts	31	28	59
Waltham Forest College	385	0	385
Bournville College of Further Education	476	56	532
Brooklyn Technical College	554	53	607
Hall Green Technical College	351	58	409
Garretts Green College	185	0	185
Matthew Boulton Technical College	578	12	590
Handsworth Technical College	197	39	236
Sutton Coldfield College of Further Education	271	42	313
Coventry Technical College	118	70	188
Henley College of Further Education	110	21	131
Tile Hill College of Further Education	472	198	670
Dudley Coll of Technology	171	174	345
Halesowen College of Further Education	72	12	84
Stourbridge College of Technology and Art	87	0	87
Warley College of Technology	399	99	498
West Bromwich College	399	148	547
Solihull College of Technology	383	191	574
Walsall College of Technology	245	494	739
Walsall College of Art	26	137	163
Wulfrun College of Further Education	282	170	452
Bilston Community Centre	331	369	700
Prescot College of Further Education	0	277	277
Kirby College of Further Education	0	335	335
Millbank College of Commerce	453	136	589
Childwall Hall College of Further Education	28	227	255
Mabel Fletcher Technical College	336	161	497
Old Swan Technical College	520	0	520
Riversdale College of Technology	133	0	133
North-East Liverpool Technical College	98	249	347
Central Liverpool College of Further Education	0	562	562
Colquitt Technical and Nautical Catering College	117	0	117
St. Helens College of Technology	564	197	761
Newton-Le-Willows College of Further Education	155	180	335
St. Helens College of Art and Design	14	47	61
Hugh Baird College of Technology	176	465	641
Southport College of Art and Technology	159	45	204
Bolton Metropolitan College	604	156	760
Bury Metropolitan College of Further Education	180	0	180
Central Manchester College	470	313	783
North Manchester College	491	139	630

	YTS Mode A	YTS Mode B	Total
Wythenshaw College of Further Education	147	93	240
Fielden Park College of Further Education	160	105	265
Oldham College of Technology	449	162	611
Rochdale Technical College	177	39	216
Salford College of Technology	165	97	262
Worsley College of Further Education	189	59	248
Stockport College of Technology	752	54	806
Tameside College of Technology	353	136	489
South Trafford College	144	90	234
North Trafford College	274	76	350
Wigan College of Technology	810	289	1,099
Leigh Technical College	291	107	398
Barnsley College of Technology	417	112	529
Doncaster Metropolitan Institute of Higher Education	731	215	946
Don Valley Institute of Further Education	161	38	199
Rotherham College of Arts and Technology	428	179	607
Rother Valley College of Further Education	1	122	123
Rockingham College of Further Education	247	161	408
Granville College	293	185	478
Richmond College of Further Education	816	71	887
Shirecliffe College	140	88	228
Stannington College of Further Education	47	183	230
Stocksbridge College of Further Education	105	148	253
Bradford and Ilkley Community College	1	216	217
Keighley Technical College	80	0	80
Shipley College	32	82	114
The Percival Whitley College of Further Education	159	179	338
Dewsbury and Batley Technical and Art College	157	110	267
Huddersfield Technical College	355	0	355
Kitson College of Technology	179	63	242
Park Lane College	264	0	264
Leeds College of Building	270	12	282
The Airedale and Wharfedale College of Further Education	185	5	190
The Thomas Danby College	178	42	220
Joseph Priestley Institute of Further Education	165	29	194
Wakefield District College	712	78	790
Gateshead Technical College	77	250	327
Newcastle Upon Tyne College of Arts and Technology	789	56	845
North Tyneside College of Further Education	292	215	507
South Shields Marine and Technical College	204	279	483
Hepburn Technical College	282	92	374
Monkwearmouth College of Further Education	250	144	394
Wearside College of Further Education	199	237	436
City and East London College	174	115	289
South East London College	278	126	404
Hackney College	270	115	385
Kingsway Princeton College	89	38	127
Brixton College for Further Education	90	91	181
Vauxhall College of Building and Further Education	172	0	172
Southwark College	45	81	126
South London College	41	9	50
Paddington College	220	64	284
North London College	89	23	112
South West London College	63	0	63
South Thames College	186	15	201
Westminster College	119	0	119
Woolwich College	45	47	92
South Bristol Technical College	363	62	425
Brunel Technical College	508	8	516
City of Bath Technical College	230	0	230
Filton Technical College	142	3	145
Soundwell Technical College	52	175	227
Weston-Super-Mare Technical College	211	0	211
Norton Radstock Technical College	230	0	230
Rolls Royce Technical College Filton	109	0	109
Luton College of HE	250	4	254
The Barnfield College	152	0	152
Reading College of Technology	364	96	460
Newbury College of Further Education	80	15	95
Windsor and Maidenhead College	97	0	97
Bracknell College	92	102	194
Langley College of Further Education	12	52	64
Berkshire College of Agriculture	82	13	95
Aylesbury College	70	21	91
Amersham College of Further Education Art and DES	43	31	74
Buckinghamshire College of HE	168	9	177
Milton Keynes College	0	79	79

	YTS Mode A	YTS Mode B	Total
Cambridge College of Further Education	34	91	125
Isle of Ely College of FE and Horticulture	116	51	167
Huntingdon Technical College	184	31	215
Peterborough Technical College	426	46	472
Cambridgeshire Farm College	42	16	58
North Cheshire College	406	293	699
South Cheshire College of Further Education	329	103	432
Macclesfield College of Further Education	115	102	217
Halton College of Further Education	217	474	691
Cheshire College of Agriculture	122	27	149
Hartlepool College of Further Education	74	243	317
Kirby College of Further Education	89	0	89
Longlands College of Further Education	90	152	242
Cleveland Technical College	55	152	207
Stockton-Billingham Technical College	93	92	185
Guisborough Agricultural Centre	0	55	55
Cornwall College of Further and Higher Education	676	55	731
Mid-Cornwall College of Further Education	147	10	157
Kendal College of Further Education	218	17	235
West Cumbria College	403	0	403
Barrow-In-Furness College of Further Education	607	27	634
Carlisle Technical College	107	0	107
Cumbria College of Agriculture and Forestry	103	0	103
Chesterfield College of Technology and Arts	650	54	704
North East Derbyshire College of FE	220	74	294
The South East Derbyshire College	511	19	530
The High Peak College of FE	144	76	220
Derby College of Further Education	1,064	336	1,400
Derbyshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture	216	0	216
Exeter College	108	161	269
North Devon College	156	10	166
East Devon College of FE	136	28	164
Plymouth College of Further Education	691	12	703
Hertfordshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture	51	0	51
Bicton College of Agriculture	402	0	402
Bournemouth and Poole College of Further Education	367	42	409
South Dorset Technical College	15	187	202
Dorset College of Agriculture	190	0	190
Darlington College of Technology	443	124	567
Bishop Auckland Technical College	201	18	219
Consett Technical College	96	16	112
New College Durham	317	114	431
Peterlee Tertiary College	210	34	244
Durham Agricultural College	172	0	172
Brighton College of Technology	400	0	400
Lewes Technical College	120	14	134
Hastings College of Arts and Technology	193	0	193
Eastbourne College of Art and Technology	136	0	136
Plumpton Agricultural College	118	12	130
Southend College of Technology	323	7	330
Braintree College of Further Education	90	23	113
Chelmer Institute of Higher Education	61	0	61
Colchester Institute	598	24	622
Harlow Technical College	199	29	228
Loughton College of Further Education	70	28	98
Basildon College of Further Education	340	0	340
Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology	839	78	917
West Gloucestershire College of Further Education	200	38	238
Mid-Gloucestershire Technical College	344	60	404
Gloucestershire College of Agriculture	218	0	218
Basingstoke Technical College	354	22	376
Farnborough College of Technology	245	0	245
Eastleigh College of Further Education	192	8	200
Fareham Technical College	199	8	207
Cricklade College	128	0	128
South Downs College of Further Education	158	62	220
Southampton Technical College	564	103	667
Highbury College of Technology	668	0	668
Portsmouth College of Art and Design and Further Education	216	71	287
Hampshire College of Agriculture	235	0	235
North Worcestershire College	216	0	216
Evesham College of Further Education	201	32	233
Herefordshire Technical College	419	30	449
Kidderminster College of Further Education	216	83	299
Redditch College	215	11	226
Worcester Technical College	282	0	282
Pershore College of Horticulture	44	0	44

	YTS Mode A	YTS Mode B	Total
Hereford College of Agriculture	134	20	154
Ware College	89	50	139
North Hertfordshire College	53	17	70
Watford College	97	46	143
De Havilland College	215	38	253
East Hertfordshire College	131	0	131
Stevenage College	34	61	95
Dacorum College	68	28	96
Hertfordshire College of Building	120	2	122
Hull College of Further Education	773	728	1,501
Grimsby College of Technology	445	95	540
Beverley College of Further Education	0	128	128
The East Yorkshire College of Further Education	53	107	160
North Lindsey College of Technology	363	256	619
Bishop Burton College of Agriculture	225	35	260
Isle of Wight College of Arts and Technology	490	0	490
North West Kent College of Technology	357	101	458
Mid Kent College of Higher/Further Education	648	17	665
West Kent College of Further Education	296	19	315
Thanet Technical College	213	0	213
South Kent College of Technology	413	46	459
Canterbury College of Technology	240	80	320
Hadlow College of Agriculture and Horticulture	112	0	112
Accrington and Rossendale College	135	32	167
Burnley College of Art and Technology	433	58	491
Blackburn College of Technology and Design	472	34	506
Lancaster and Morecambe College of FE	416	67	483
Nelson and Colne College	294	66	360
Blackpool and Fylde Coll of F & HE	201	334	535
W R Tuson College	303	129	432
Lancashire College of Agric and Hort	162	0	162
Coalville Technical College	169	49	218
Hinckley College of Further Education	174	53	227
Loughborough Technical College	157	18	175
Melton Mowbray College of Further Education	223	12	235
Wigston College of Further Education	229	0	229
Charles Keene College of Further Education	0	50	50
South Fields College of Further Education	339	0	339
Grantham College for Further Education	213	22	235
Stamford College for Further Education	58	18	76
Boston College of Further Education	270	0	270
Lincoln College of Technology	247	83	330
Gainsborough College of Further Education	104	39	143
Lincolnshire College of Art	47	10	57
Lincolnshire Coll of Agri & Hort	317	0	317
Norfolk College of Arts and Technology	484	59	543
Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education	499	23	522
Great Yarmouth College of Further Education	162	53	215
Norfolk College of Agriculture and Horticulture	128	0	128
Scarborough Technical College	168	0	168
York College of Arts and Technology	371	0	371
Harrogate College of Further Education	51	28	79
Craven College of Adult Education	73	0	73
Selby College of Further Education	116	0	116
Askham Bryan College of Agriculture and Hort.	59	0	59
Bedale Agricultural Centre	66	0	66
Pickering Agricultural Centre	65	0	65
Tresham College	378	134	512
The Wellingborough College	256	27	283
Northampton College of Further Education	0	111	111
Northants College of Agriculture	66	0	66
Northumberland Technical College	304	107	411
Broxtowe College of Further Education	234	46	280
Clarendon College of Further Education	268	33	301
West Nottinghamshire College of FE	945	0	945
Newark Technical College	222	22	244
North Nottinghamshire College of FE	363	180	543
People's College of FE	245	0	245
Arnold and Carlton College of FE	149	48	197
Basford Hall College of Further Education	635	0	635
South Nottingham Coll of FE	113	0	113
Nottinghamshire College of Agriculture	119	0	119
North Oxfordshire Tech Coll and School of Art	242	91	333
South Oxfordshire Technical College	44	83	127
West Oxfordshire Technical College	35	27	62
Oxford College of Further Education	220	101	321
Abingdon College of Further Education	44	50	94

	YTS Mode A	YTS Mode B	Total
Telford College of Arts and Technology	306	158	464
Oswestry College	171	33	204
Shrewsbury College of Art and Technology	433	0	433
Bridgnorth and South Shropshire Coll of FE	150	86	236
Bridgwater College	67	151	218
Frome College	86	11	97
Somerset College of Arts and Technology	290	29	319
Yeovil College	201	115	316
Strode College	131	36	167
Somerset College of Agriculture and Horticulture	263	0	263
Stoke-on-Trent Cauldon College of FE	0	576	576
Burton-on-Trent Technical College	321	37	358
Cannock Chase Technical College	248	21	269
Leek College of Further Education and School of Art	0	53	53
Newcastle College of Further Education and School of Art	376	7	383
Stafford College of Further Education	150	16	166
Tamworth College of Further Education	243	76	319
Staffordshire College of Agriculture	263	22	285
West Suffolk College of Further Education	504	28	532
Lowestoft College of Further Education	342	21	363
Suffolk College of Higher and Further Education	418	10	428
East Suffolk Institute of Agriculture and Horticulture	134	20	154
North East Surrey College of Technology	1	84	85
Guildford County College of Technology	241	0	241
East Surrey College	279	75	354
Brooklands Technical College	126	15	141
Merrist Wood Agricultural College	84	0	84
Mid-Warwickshire College of Further Education	222	81	303
North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art and Nuneaton	324	292	616
South Warwickshire College of Further Education	151	23	174
East Warwickshire College of Further Education	299	18	317
Warwickshire College of Agriculture	230	0	230
Crawley College of Technology	160	22	182
Worthing College of Technology	246	0	246
Chichester College of Technology	296	0	296
West Sussex College of Agriculture and Horticulture	148	0	148
Chippenham Technical College	157	0	157
Salisbury College of Technology	145	75	220
The College Swindon	360	31	391
Trowbridge Technical College	183	98	281
Lackham College of Agriculture	181	14	195
All Colleges	78,172	23,640	101,812

SCOTLAND

Dental Technicians

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dental technicians expressed as whole-time equivalents were employed by health boards in Scotland at 30 September 1984; and what contribution those who undertake private work make towards the overheads that they use.

Mr. John MacKay: The number of dental technicians (expressed as whole-time equivalents) employed by health boards in Scotland at 30 September 1984 was 147. Information is not held centrally on the contribution made by those who undertake private work towards the overheads that they use.

Airports Policy

Mr. Fairbairn asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chairman of the British Airports Authority to discuss airports policy in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of the British Airports Authority from time to time and last did so on 4 February 1985. There are no present plans for a further meeting. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport announced on 4 April 1985 at column 740 our decision following a review of the Scottish lowland airports policy. Other aspects of airports policy are dealt with in the White Paper on Airports Policy, Cmnd 9542, published on 5 June 1985.

Broadleaved Woodland

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the area within Scotland covered by broadleaved deciduous woodland in *(a)* 1955, *(b)* 1960, *(c)* 1970, *(d)* 1975, *(e)* 1980 and *(f)* the latest available year; and if he will make a statement on planting and conservation policy.

Mr. Younger: Figures are available only for the years in which a census of woodland was carried out. These are as follows for woodland over 0·25 hectares:

Estimated Area of Broadleaved Woodland

Mean survey date	*(hectares)*
1950	162,000
1965	142,000
1980	136,000

The Forestry Commission is completing its review of broadleaves policy, and I expect to make a statement before the summer recess.

Edinburgh Dental Hospital

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the present position relating to the Edinburgh dental hospital.

Mr. John MacKay: In my answer of 24 May 1985 to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) at column *583* I referred to further discussions which are being arranged between Edinburgh university, Lothian health board, the University Grants Committee and the Scottish Home and Health Department. Until that meeting has taken place, there is nothing I can add to that answer.

Housing Defects Act

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the booklet giving advice and guidance on the operation of the Housing Defects Act will be made available to local authorities in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The booklet of guidance was issued to local authorities in Scotand on 7 June.

Teachers (Dispute)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many teaching days were lost in Scotland through industrial action from August 1984 until the end of April 1985.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Approximately 112,000 teaching days out of a possible total of 8,000,000 were lost as a direct result of industrial action connected with the current pay dispute.

Friarton Detention Centre

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many inmates in Friarton detention centre have been placed on strict suicide observation during each quarter of 1984 and the first quarter of 1985.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

	Numbers
1984	
First quarter	4
Second quarter	6
Third quarter	2
Fourth quarter	0
1985	
First quarter	4

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland for what periods the offenders concerned at Friarton detention centre, who were under strict suicide observation during 1984 and the first quarter of 1985, have been kept under observation.

Mr. Ancram: The periods for which inmates were kept under strict suicide observation during 1984 and the first quarter of 1985, were as follows:

	Number of days
1984	
First quarter	Periods from 1 day to 5 days
Second quarter	Periods from 1 day to 3 days
Third quarter	Periods from 2 days to 3 days
Fourth quarter	Nil
1985	
First quarter	Periods from 1 day to 3 days

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many self-inflicted injuries had been recorded as being inflicted during detention at Friarton detention centre, during 1984 and the first quarter of 1985.

Mr. Ancram: The number of self-inflicted injuries recorded was as follows:

	Number
1984	12
1985 (first quarter)	6

Conifers (Survey)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Forestry Commission survey of conifers in 1984 revealed any damage similar to that seen in other countries than West Germany.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission's systematic survey of conifers in Great Britain carried out in 1984 revealed no damage of a kind attributed to air pollution either in West Germany or elsewhere. The Commission has no evidence that tree damage associated with air pollution in other countries—apart from that in the near vicinity or particular sources of emission creating unique damage symptoms—shows different symptoms from those ascribed to air pollution in West Germany. The Commission maintains close contact with scientists in other countries in order to ensure that it is aware of any new forms of damage linked with air pollution.

Veterinary Services

Mr. Archy Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider setting up an inquiry into the efficiency of veterinary services in Scotland, on similar lines to that recently carried out in England and Wales.

Mr. John MacKay: A study of the veterinary investigation service in England and Wales was commissioned last year by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as part of the Government's programme of efficiency studies.

In Scotland, the veterinary investigation service forms part of the Advisory Services provided by the three Scottish agricultural colleges. The financing and management of these services, including the veterinary investigation service, are currently being reviewed in the light of the Government's decision announced in the Public Expenditure White Paper published in January 1985, to reduce the level of public funding of the advisory services in 1987-88, and any further review would not be appropriate at this stage.

Rates Relief (Edinburgh)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he can give any estimate as to how many *(a)* domestic ratepayers and *(b)* commercial ratepayers qualify for relief in Edinburgh, on the basis of

the assessor's initial revaluation before considering any appeals under the terms of the Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Office does not hold the detailed information on the valuation of all properties in a local area on which such estimates of numbers qualifying in Edinburgh would have to be based. I have asked Lothian region to provide my hon. Friend with what estimates it may have available for the Edinburgh area.

Peel Hospital (Pay Bed)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on what grounds he authorised a pay bed at Peel hospital.

Mr. John MacKay: Following consideration of a proposal for four in-patient beds at Peel hospital, my right hon. Friend decided that one private bed would provide a sufficient element of choice for private patients in the area.

Health Boards (Resources)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the net financial effect in terms of budgetary savings which will have to be found from existing resources for each of the health boards in Scotland as a result of Her Majesty's Government's decision on the recommendations of the Review Body on Nurses and Midwives Pay.

Mr. John MacKay: The pay awards to NHS staff in Scotland covered by the recommendations of the Review Body for Nurses and Midwives will cost about £28·8 million in 1985-86. The cost to health boards will be some £6 million more than the amount allowed for inflation in their recurrent expenditure allocations for the year, equivalent to nearly 0·5 per cent. of their revenue budgets in total. Information about the precise costs of the award to each Board is not readily available.

ENVIRONMENT

Inner Cities (Expenditure)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the outturn amount of expenditure for 1983-84 and 1984-85 in each of the inner city and urban programme areas of inner city programme expenditure and distinguishing in each case between capital and revenue and voluntary and statutory sectors.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I shall answer his question shortly.

Greater London Council

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will estimate the total costs arising from staff redundancies following abolition of the Greater London council;

(2) what level of savings he has now positively identified arising out of the abolition of the Greater London council;

(3) what transitional costs will arise out of abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer these questions shortly.

EMPLOYMENT

Parental and Family Leave

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Employment what policy he will adopt at the meeting of Ministers in Brussels on 14 June towards the EEC directive on parental leave and leave for family reasons.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government have consistently made it clear, both in this country and during discussions in Brussels, that they are opposed to proposals of this kind which we firmly believe are best dealt with between employers and employees according to their own needs, priorities and circumstances rather than by Government or Community intervention. We will bear in mind the views of those organisations which responded to the Department's consultation exercise when this matter is raised at the Council meeting, but we do think we should all concentrate our minds and efforts on the problems faced by the unemployed, rather than further improving the position of people who already have jobs.

16 to 19-year-olds

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 to 19-year-olds are *(a)* on the unemployment register and *(b)* in employment; and what percentage of the relevant age group these represent.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest available estimates are shown in the following table:

Great Britain, January 1985

	Numbers	*Per cent.*
Age 16-19 years*		
Total population	3,620,000	100
Claimant unemployed	600,000	17
Age 16-18 years*		
Total population	2,680,000	100
Claimant unemployed	440,000	16
In full-time education or YTS	1,130,000	42
Other: mainly employed outside YTS†	1,110,000	41

* Ages as at 31 August 1984.

† Mainly those in employment but excluding those employed under the youth training scheme and including some who were seeking work but not claiming benefit and others who were neither employed nor seeking work—for example, because of domestic responsibilities. This group is obtained by subtracting from the total population of the age group those estimated to be in full-time education or in the youth training scheme and the claimant unemployed. No estimate is shown for 16 to 19-year-olds as the education data do not readily distinguish 19-year-olds.

The estimates are provisional and have been rounded to the nearest 10,000 or 1 per cent.

Fairground Accidents

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of fairground accidents in the last five years in which there has been *(a)* injury and *(b)* death and the total number of resultant deaths.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The numbers of fairground accidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive involving death or major injury over the last five years are as follows:

Year	Total number of Incidents	Total number of fairground accidents involving: Major Injuries	Fatal Injuries	Total number of resultant deaths
1980	13	13	2	2
1981	n.a.	20	2	2
1982	23	23	4	4
1983	23	28	3	3
1984	37	38	2	2
1985*	7	10	1	1

Wages Councils

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the organisations and indicate the number of individuals who have responded to the consultative paper on wages councils, and those organisations and the overall number of respondents who have shown that they would not favour the outright abolition of wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Representations are still being received which we are taking into account. It would be premature to publish an analysis at this stage. I shall disclose the results of the consultation when we have completed our study of all the responses.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many registered males and registered females are currently employed in Hattersley within the metropolitan district of Tameside; and how much greater is the proportion of unemployed people in this area than it was in May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is not available, but unemployment figures for individual wards will be available in the Library shortly.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been unemployed in the county of Derbyshire for *(a)* more than five years, *(b)* between four and five years, *(c)* between three and four years, *(d)* between two and three years and *(e)* between one and two years.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is available in the Library. The figures relate to 11 April 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available. Figures given are for Derbyshire defined in terms of jobcentre areas. The full range of analyses by age and duration will shortly be available for areas defined in terms of wards.

Unemployed claimants—Derbyshire
11 April 1985

Duration of unemployment	
More than five years	1,704
Between four and five years	2,222
Between three and four years	3,069
Between two and three years	4,500
Between one and two years	9,252

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* part-time and *(b)* full-time jobs were created in 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employees in employment at different dates.

The following table gives the available information from the employees in employment series. Data are collected quarterly and the figures in the table reflect the changes between December each year. Analyses of full-time and part-time jobs are available from the series only for female employees in employment.

Employees in employment, Great Britain: annual changes at December each year

	All males	Females full-time	Females part-time
1981-82	−276,000	−201,000	15,000
1982-83	−129,000	−53,000	219,000
1983-84	−60,000	−14,000	187,000

Note:
In this table an employee is classified as full-time if she normally works more than 30 hours a week.

The labour force survey provides information on a different basis. The following table shows the available survey estimates of the change in the number of persons in full-time and part-time employment.

Persons in employment, Great Britain: Labour Force Survey estimates

	Change between spring 1981 and spring 1983	Change between spring 1983 and spring 1984
Persons in full-time employment	−753,000	+10,000
Persons in part-time employment	−99,000	+474,000

Note:
In this table a person is shown as full-time if he regards his job as a full-time job. Figures include both employees and the self-employed. Estimates of the change between 1981 and 1983 are subject to greater error because of changes in the survey questions.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of people unemployed in 1955, 1965 and 1975 were out of work for more than one year; and what is the comparable figure at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the percentage of the unemployed in Great Britain who had been unemployed for over one year. Figures are given for unemployed registrants in March 1955, April 1965 and April 1975, and for unemployed claimants at April 1985. Figures are also shown on both bases for October 1982, when the basis of the unemployment count has changed. The figures are also affected by the provisions of the 1983 Budget which mean that since April 1983 certain men aged over 60 need no longer sign on at an unemployment benefit office.

Unemployed over one year as a percentage of total unemployed—Great Britain

Date	Per Cent
Registered unemployed	
March 1955	10·4
April 1965	17·4
April 1975	14·7
October 1982	35·3

Date	Per Cent
Unemployed claimants	
October 1982	32·1
April 1985	40·4

Dieldrin

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those products containing the pesticide dieldrin, which may be used or sold in the United Kingdom for whatever purpose.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following list gives products containing dieldrin notified to the Health and Safety Executive or the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under the pesticides safety precautions scheme. The scheme is a formally negotiated agreement between industry and the Government under which pesticides are evaluated and cleared for safety. It also provides for notifications when cleared products are withdrawn, but the list may nevertheless include a few products which are now out of production. There are separate entries covering small product variations because individual clearances are required for each of these.

Products Containing Dieldrin

Products Cleared for Professional use only

Cuprinol Difusol
Killgerm Dethlac Insecticidal Lacquer
Larrols Timber Paste
Remtox Paste Preservative
Solignum Fl Paste
Woodtreat
Wykamol Mayonnaise

Products Cleared for Industrial Pre-Treatment Use Only

Dipsar Brown
Dipsar Clear
Dipsar Green
Imersol
Protim 80
Protim 80 C
Protim 80 SDT
Protim 80 WR
Protim Brown
Solignum Antifungus Fluid 'O'
Solignum Fluid NF
Solignum Fluid S
Strathbond Brown
Strathbond Clear
Timbercare WR QD
Vacsele
Vacsol
Vacsol Concentrate
Vacsol WR
Vacsol WR Concentrate

Crop Spraying Pollution

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to amend the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act to enable those affected by agricultural crop spraying pollution to discover from the Health and Safety Executive or the user which chemical is involved.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have asked the Health and Safety Commission to advise whether the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 present any obstacles to the disclosures of information the public may reasonably need. The commission published in March of this year a discussion document, "Access to health and safety information by members of the public," and will be giving its advice when it has studied the responses to the document. On the basis of that advice we will consider the need for the Act to be amended.

Employee Involvement

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make available the results of his monitoring of the operation of section 1 of the Employment Act 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has today deposited the results of the monitoring exercise in the Library of the House. The results show that companies have made an encouraging start in reporting their employee involvement arrangements. We have seen some excellent reports and a wealth of voluntary employee involvement practices has been revealed. Others, however, are not fulfilling their obligations as required, and we intend to discuss this with employers' organisations. We need to build on the stimulus section 1 has given to the success of the voluntary approach and ensure that employee involvement becomes the practice throughout those companies covered by the Act.

Community Programmes (Leicester)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he is yet in a position to report on the renewal by Leicester city council of its various community programme projects; and if he will list the organisations involved and numbers of people liable to be on the various programmes;

(2) how many places have been allocated under various community programme projects within Leicester city council for the period 1985-86; how this compares with the previous 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 June 1985, c. *204*]: Leicester city council's agency agreement provided for 400 places in the years ending 31 July 1984 and 31 July 1985. I understand that because of decisions taken by the local branch of NALGO, the council has not yet applied for the renewal of its community programme agency agreement. I hope that, in the interests of the long-term unemployed people in Leicester, it will do so. I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible about organisations currently involved in community programme projects with Leicester city council's agency, and will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many places have been allocated under community programme projects within the city of Leicester; and how this compares with the previous 12 months.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 June 1985, c. *204*]: 990 places on the community programme have been available for the city of Leicester during the last 12 months. The expansion of the programme by 100,000 places nationally over the next 12 months enables significant increases to be made in all areas.

THE ARTS

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what

submission has been made to the Minister for the Arts by the Arts Council regarding the sum it considers necessary to maintain standards of provision of the arts should the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils be abolished; how much has been offered by the Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and noble Friend has seen the press release issued by the Arts Council about the total amount needed to support the arts after abolition. He understands that the Arts Council will be making a formal request for increased funding in due course. The Government have announced that they will provide £34 million in 1986-87, of which £16 million is for the Arts Council.

It remains the Government's view that part of the necessary provision should be met by the boroughs and districts, whose ratepayers will carry a smaller burden after abolition. My noble Friend will give careful consideration to the Arts Council's calculations and to any formal proposal which it may put to him.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts if he intends to offer additional money to the Arts Council beyond the present level offered to fund arts organisations affected by abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and noble Friend will consider the matter along with other proposals for increases in the present level of funding for the arts.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what representations he has received from the Arts Council about the level of funding to be made available to meet the needs of arts organisations affected by abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and noble Friend has discussed the matter with the chairman of the Arts Council, and received a copy of the council's press release.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Publications (Languages)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which of his Department's publications are also produced in languages other than English; and which are the additional languages used.

Mr. Whitney: The Department's general guide to the benefits available, leaflet FB2 entitled "Which Benefit", is also produced in Chinese, Bengali, Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu. These versions known as leaflet FB22 were first introduced in March of this year.

There are also Welsh language versions of leaflets D11 (NHS Dental Treatment), G11 (NHS Glasses), FB2, FIS1 (Family Income Supplement), RR1 (Rent and Rates), SB1 (Cash Help), FB20 (Leaving School) and SA20 (Medical Costs Abroad), and a translation of leaflet SB1 into Gaelic.

Northern Gas

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of any special arrangements between his Department and Northern Gas for the supply of cookers at discount rates to recipients of supplementary benefit, indicating when such arrangements were made and why.

Mr. Whitney: In determining the level of payment to be awarded when a new cooker is to be provided, local offices of the Department normally contact suppliers in their area to obtain the range of prices at which suitable cookers are available locally. In seeking this information it is made clear that claimants will not be referred to one sole trader, and that within the price range determined by the local office, claimants will be free to locate the item for themselves.

It is for the commercial judgement of suppliers, including Northern Gas, to determine the price at which they are prepared to sell cookers: if any supplier chooses to sell cookers to supplementary benefit claimants at a discount that is for them to decide, and I understand that this is the case with Northern Gas.

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will announce the names of chairmen and members of the study groups to examine the possible changes in the negotiation arrangements between the Government and the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In the past few weeks we have concluded negotiations with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC) into a new contract for NHS community pharmacists. I understand that the PSNC will be recommending acceptance of the Government's final offer to the conference of local pharmaceutical committees to be held on 23 June. The details of the implementation of the new contract proposals, including the composition of the proposed study group, will be considered by the Government and PSNC if, as we hope, the conference of LPCs votes to accept the offer.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of clinical placements for speech therapists in England and Wales for each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not keep this information. It is the responsibility of the College of Speech Therapists to recognise courses in speech therapy and to oversee clinical placements for training.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of children in families receiving family income supplement.

Mr. Whitney: At the end of March 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, about 417,000 children were included in families receiving family income supplement.

Medicines (Prices)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is monitoring changes in the price of

medicines formerly available on National Health Service prescription and not now available since the introduction of the limited list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to monitor the market price of drugs which are no longer prescribable on National Health Service prescriptions.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. There is no reason for us to monitor the price of drugs which are not available under the National Health Service.

Ruthenium

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much ruthenium was supplied to British hospitals for cancer research for the latest three-monthly, six-monthly and yearly periods for which figures are available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not routinely collect information on this subject. However, no cancer research commissioned by us involves the use of ruthenium and we are not aware of any being supplied for this purpose to other researchers.

"Unemployment, Health and Social Policy"

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take in response to the report on "Unemployment, Health and Social Policy" by the Nuffield centre for health service studies, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he intends to implement its proposed policy changes, at nil extra cost, to improve the health of the unemployed.

Mr. John Patten: We are aware of the report. We do not accept that the measures it proposes involve nil extra cost. Our priority is to continue to pursue policies to bring down unemployment and to continue to meet the health needs of the population, whatever their cause.

NHS (Darkroom Technicians)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much it would cost to increase National Health Service darkroom technicians' running repairs allowance in line with inflation to 1985 since its last increase in 1971; and what proportion of the professional and technical branch E committee budget such an improvement would take.

Mr. John Patten: The cost of increasing this and another similar allowance in line with the movement in the retail price index since 1971 is estimated to be £127,000 or 0·17 per cent. of the committee's paybill. Our information does not allow us to distinguish the two allowances.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many housing benefit recipients receive less than £11 per week for *(a)* rent and rates and *(b)* rent only; and what proportion these people are of the total number of housing benefit recipients;

(2) what number and proportion of housing benefit recipients receive below £1, £1-2, £2-3, £3-4, £4-5, £5-6, £6-7, £7-8, £8-9 and £10-11 per week, respectively; and what are their average earnings.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Population Study

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to take any action following publication of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' longitudinal study, showing 20 per cent. higher risks of death amongst unemployed men and their wives.

Mr. John Patten: I have nothing to add to my reply on 18 February to the hon. Member at column *397*.

NHS (Consultants)

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of domiciliary visits by all National Health Service consultants in the years ended 30 September 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The number of domiciliary visits by all National Health Service consultants in England and Wales in the years ended 30 September 1982, 1983 and 1984 are 426,000, 437,000 and 386,000 respectively.

Private Hospital Development

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list such information as is available to him as to the companies and the sites of the proposed or actual private hospital developments where notification has not been given under section 14 of the Health Services Act 1976, as amended by the Health Services Act 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: During 1984 it became clear that the requirement to notify us of proposed private hospital developments in advance of seeking planning permission was not sufficiently well known. We have, therefore, taken action to remind potential developers of this requirement. We have asked the Association of Independent Hospitals, the Independent Hospital Group, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Law Society to draw this to the attention of their members.

Whenever we become aware of any proposed development which appears to require notification we get in touch with the company responsible and ask that they complete the form of notification. All notifications are passed for information to the relevant district health authority. The late notifications received since January 1984 are in the table. We do not name companies who notify us of their intention because of the commercial nature of the information.

Late notifications received since January 1984

	Number of beds
St. Vincents Road, Torquay*	40
Birchin Cross Road, Kemsing, Nr. Sevenoaks*	30
Bourn Hall Clinic, Cambridge† (replacing 30 beds in temporary accommodation)	42
The Sloane Hospital, London SE3†	‡64
The Garden Hospital, London NW4 (additional beds)	2
Beverley road, Anlaby, Hull (re-notification)	25
New Road, Impington, Cambridgeshire	‖25

	Number of beds
New Hall Hospital, Bodenham, Salisbury (additional beds)	13
Ipswich Surgical Home, Suffolk (additional beds)	12
The Grosvenor Nuffield Hospital, Chester (additional beds)	10
The Wessex Nuffield Hospital, Chandlers Ford (additional beds)	12

*Included in list of notifications in *Official Report*, 28 March 1984, columns 219-220.

†Included in list of notifications in *Official Report*, 21 January 1985, column 330.

‡New company purchased site with planning permission—no trace of earlier notification.

New company purchased site with planning permission—but re-notification required because of changes to proposal.

Cremations (Form C)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to remove the present charge made by doctors for signing form C for cremations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No, for the same reason I gave in my reply to the hon. Member about form B on 13 May at column *34*. However we have recently dispensed with certificate C where the death has occurred in hospital and a post-mortem has been held by a registered medical practitioner of at least five years' standing.

Drug Addicts

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what National Health Service facilities are available in Sussex for the treatment of drug addicts.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Prison Hospital Service

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has had on the relationship between the National Health Service and the prison hospital service.

Mr. John Patten: None recently, though this question is the subject of public discussion from time to time. Various branches of the National Health Service make a significant contribution to prison medical services.

Social Security Review

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will produce detailed costings of all the proposals in the social security Green Paper.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the expected loss to claimants under the social security Green Paper proposals of contributing towards the cost of rates.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Members to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 6 June at column *241*.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any of the new income related benefits contained in the social security Green Paper will be subject to any cash limits.

Mr. Newton: The new social fund will have a fixed annual budget, as stated in the social security Green Paper (volume 2, paragraph 2.112). Cash limits will not apply to income-related maintenance benefits described in the Green Paper.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the effect of his proposal to remove the power of local education authorities to provide reduced cost school meals; and if he will define this term as used in paragraph 4.51 of volume 2 of the "Reform of Social Security".

Mr. Newton: The reference to "reduced cost" relates to the provision in section 22(3)(b) of the Education Act 1980 and the corresponding provision in section 53(3)(b) in respect of Scotland, that a local education authority (LEA) shall remit the whole or any part of any charge that would otherwise be made if, having regard to the particular circumstances of any pupil or class or description of pupils, they consider it appropriate to do so.

Some LEAs are understood to remit part of the charge under this provision, but no separate estimate has been made of the effect of this part of the proposals.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make it his policy that, if the proposals in the Green Paper, "Reform of Social Security", Cmnd. 9517 are implemented 16 and 17-year-olds will continue to be entitled to supplementary benefit if they are unable to find work;

(2) if he has any plans to review the levels of supplementary benefit payable to 16 and 17-year-olds in the light of the inception of the new extended youth training scheme in 1986.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 4 April at column *766* and to paragraph 9.27 of volume 1 of the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9517).

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how he intends to distinguish, in monitoring National Health Service drug costs and savings under limited list prescribing between cost reductions due to reduced return on capital for pharmaceutical companies and those due to the introduction of the limited list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Monitoring of the volume and cost of prescriptions in the categories affected by the selected list and information from drug manufacturers will enable us to draw a distinction between savings in the drugs bill resulting from the introduction of selected list prescribing and those resulting from other measures.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated saving in National Health Service drug costs which will ensue in a full year from the introduction of the limited list.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: £75 million.

Drug Prices

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many items on the drug tariff have fallen in price during 1985.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In the period 1 January to 31 May 1985, a total of 32 items listed in the drug tariff have reduced in price.

Drugs (Hospital Pharmacies)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will assess the potential savings to the National Health Service by means of hospital doctors prescribing longer courses of drugs through hospital pharmacies for appropriate outpatients and inpatients who are being discharged, rather than arranging for an early prescription from the patient's general practitioner;

(2) whether he has any evidence of a fall in the period for which hospital doctors are prescribing drugs to be dispensed by hospital pharmacies, both for inpatients on discharge and for outpatients, thus requiring general practitioners to prescribe earlier as part of family practitioner services; and what is the additional cost to the National Health Service of this change in policy in the current year.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect information on the length of time for which doctors prescribe. In any case, comparisons between the costs of hospital and general practice pharmacy cannot easily be made. However, our policy on out-patient prescribing—which is clearly understood by health authorities and must be followed by them — is that prescribing responsibility rests with the clinician who is responsible for the patient's clinical care. There should be no attempt to circumvent this policy for any financial reason.

Board and Lodging Payment

Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the options that are open to board and lodging claimants aged between 19 and 26 years upon completion of the period for which payment as a boarder is permitted under the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985; if he will detail the full amounts payable to such a claimant under such circumstances either through unemployment or supplementary benefit, personal allowance and non-householder allowance and through housing benefit where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: A fit unemployed person aged between 19 and 26 without dependants is entitled to supplementary benefit as a boarder for periods which, unless he falls in to one of the excepted categories, are limited. At the end of such periods, supplementary benefit will change to the rate applicable to a non-householder (£22.45 a week for a single person with an addition of £3·30 for those aged 21 or over). This rate also applies where the person goes to live with family or friends. If he takes up rented accommodation the householder rate of £28.05 applies and he is eligible for housing benefit which depends on the level of his rent and rates. If he moves to another area as a boarder he will again become eligible for a further restricted period to the personal expenses allowance of £9.25 plus an allowance for his board and lodgings according to the limit appropriate to that area.

Benefits

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average amount of *(a)* housing benefit and *(b)* supplementary benefit received by a student in higher education; and if he will estimate what proportion of student income each figure represented in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will list in the *Official Report (a)* the number and percentage of students in higher education who received housing benefit, *(b)* the number and percentage of students in higher education who received supplementary benefit and *(c)* the cost of administering each type of benefit for students in each case in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: Precise information about the number of students receiving benefits is not available. It is estimated that in the last academic year about 200,000 full-time students (roughly 50 per cent. of those living away from home) received housing benefit in term-time and a lesser number in vacations. The cost of administering housing benefit claims from students is not known.

It is estimated that some 100,000 claims to supplementary benefit were made by students in the Christmas and Easter vacations and about 300,000 in the long vacation. These figures include repeat claims and it is not possible to say how many individual students received supplementary benefit during the year. It is estimated that student claims for supplementary benefit cost about £2·5 million to administer.

Doctors (Pay)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is considering modifying general practitioner remuneration by eliminating item of service payments in favour of increased capitation fees.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are looking at the way in which general medical practitioners are remunerated as part of our current review of the family doctor service.

Diabetics

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's policy on the use of disposable plastic syringes by diabetics requiring insulin injections.

Mr. John Patten: If a consultant considers it clinically necessary for a particular patient to use these syringes, which are designed for single use, they may be supplied on the National Health Service through the hospital service. They are not available on GP's prescriptions.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of *(a)* specialist diabetic physicians and *(b)* specialist diabetic nurses currently engaged with each of the area health authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not have this information centrally.

National Insurance

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many companies or individuals were prosecuted during 1984 by his Department for non-payment of national insurance contributions on behalf of their employees; and what were the comparable figures for each of the previous five years.

Mr. Whitney: The table shows the number of companies and individuals who were prosecuted for non-payment of national insurance contributions on behalf of their employees.

	Criminal prosecutions for non-payment of Class 1 NI contributions	*Civil actions to recover unpaid Class 1 NI contributions*
1979	260	527
1980	307	836
1981	461	945
1982	808	1,137
1983	1,625	1,038
1984	2,278	976

Mrs. Sylvia Jones

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will investigate how Mrs. Sylvia Jones came to be employed for 11½ years in Epsom's mental hospitals as a nurse, although she was unqualified; whether there are other unqualified people being similarly employed; and whether patients are known to have suffered as a result of Mrs. Jones' lack of qualifications.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I understand that the Mid-Surrey health authority is taking active steps to establish the full facts of this case and to review its appointment procedures for nursing staff within the District. We have asked for a full report on this as soon as the facts have been established and will consider in the light of this what further action may need to be taken.

Youth Training Scheme (Benefit)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of 16 and 17-year-olds who have had their supplementary benefit payment cut as a result of not accepting a place on the youth training scheme since September 1984.

Mr. Whitney: The number of 16 and 17-year-olds who had their supplementary benefit reduced because they had, without good cause, refused a place on the youth training scheme during the period 26 September 1984 to 7 May 1985 (the latest date available) was 309.

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether 16 and 17-year-olds will continue to be eligible to receive supplementary benefit if they are unable to find work but have refused a place on the youth training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

(2) whether, in the case of a claimant of supplementary benefit refusing to take part in a Government training scheme, he or she is deemed to be unavailable for work and therefore not entitled to claim benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Under section 20(1) *(e)* of the Social Security Act 1975 a person is disqualified for receiving unemployment benefit for a period not exceeding 6 weeks if he has, without good cause, refused a reasonable opportunity of receiving training approved by the Secretary of State in his case for the purposes of becoming or keeping fit for entry, or return to, regular employment. Supplementary benefit is reduced, normally by 40 per cent, of the personal scale rate, for the same period in accordance with regulation 8 of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations 1983. These provisions apply equally to the youth training scheme and to other forms of approved training. A person is not deemed to be unavailable for work solely on the basis of his refusing an offer of training.

Pensioners

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioners from ethnic minority groups he estimates there will be in *(a)* 1987, *(b)*1991 and *(c)*2001; and how many of these will be of (i) Asian, (ii) Cypriot, (iii) Chinese and (iv) Afro-Caribbean origin.

Mr. John Patten: The only available projections of the population in ethnic minority groups are those based on mid-1976 population estimates and published in Population Trends 16 in 1979. These projections cover the whole population of New Commonwealth and Pakistan ethnic origin and show that by 1986 the number aged 65 and over in Great Britain would probably be within the range 53-55,000, while in 1991 the number would probably be within the range 73-78,000—depending on what was assumed about the future level of immigration and emigration. These figures are consistent with the latest information from the labour force survey on the present size of ethnic minority groups and published in OPCS Monitor PP1 84/5 in December 1984.

Nurses and Midwives (Pay)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the net financial effect in terms of budgetary savings which will have to be found from existing resources for each of the health authorities in England and Wales as a result of Her Majesty's Government's decision on the recommendations of the Review Body on Nurses and Midwives Pay.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government's decision on nurses' and midwives pay will cost health authorities in England £173 million in 1985-86 — a 5·6 per cent. increase on the paybill for these groups. Health authority cash limits for 1985-86 included a cash increase of 5½ per cent. or over £500 million. Health authorities n England will also have available to them resources released by the growing programme of cost improvements which are planned to amount to about £150 million in 1985-86.

It will be for individual health authorities to calculate the cost of the pay awards to themselves and settle their funding arrangements in the light of local circumstances.

Health (Social Inequalities)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Service if he will make a statement on the actions taken by his Department since 1979 to reduce social inequalities affecting health.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 June 1985, c. *238*]: The inequalities and deficiencies in health

care with which we seek to deal include not only inequalities between social groups but also inequalities between localities and between different services and types of care. The Government's policy is aimed at directing services towards areas of greatest need and towards the most vulnerable groups of people, and will benefit those whose health needs may arise from social inequalities.

NORTHERN IRELAND

State Pensions

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of men and women residing in Northern Ireland who are in receipt of state retirement pensions.

Mr. Chris Patten: The estimated number in receipt of contributory retirement pensions is 203,000.

Driving Tests

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current length of time which elapses between applying for and sitting a test for a full driving licence in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: Seven weeks on average.

Roads (Construction and Maintenance)

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how the present level of expenditure on the construction and maintenance of roads in Northern Ireland compares with the level in 1978-79.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

	1978-79 £ million	*1984-85 £ million*
Construction	27·8	20·9
Maintenance	31·7	46·5
TOTALS	59·5	67·4

Cycle Paths

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any provision is made for cycle paths in the programme of roads expenditure by his Department for 1985-86.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes. Provision is made for the upkeep of cycle paths.

Transport Bill

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has yet reached a conclusion as to whether the provisions of the Transport Bill will at some future time be applied in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 20 February 1985 at column *505*. I continue to monitor the progress of the Transport Bill and will in due course consider the application of similar provisions to Northern Ireland, where relevant.

Labour Statistics

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total number of people in employment in Northern Ireland at the end of March in each of the past five years.

Dr. Boyson: The information requested is only available for the first Monday in March of each year and is as follows:

Northern Ireland employees in employment

	Numbers
March 1981	491,160
March 1982	478,690
March 1983	465,180
March 1984	462,570
March 1985	463,870

Conservation

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the sums spent on the following activities in 1984-85, and projected to be spent on them in 1985-86: *(a)* the identification and notification of areas of special scientific interest by the conservation branch, *(b)* management agreements with the owners/occupiers of areas of special scientific interest land by the conservation branch, *(c)* grants to voluntary bodies for scientific survey work to identify potential areas of special scientific interest and *(d)* grants to voluntary bodies to purchase areas of special scientific interest as nature reserves.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

	1984-85 expenditure	*1985-86 projected expenditure*
(a)	£13,100	£100,000
(b)	nil	nil
(c)	nil	nil
(d)	nil	nil

Strip Searches

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Armagh, in May; if he will give the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; whether any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and if he will indicate the reasons for the search, namely, making an appearance at Armagh courthouse on remand, attending trial, inter-prison visit or other reasons.

Mr. Scott: During May 1985 a total of 64 searches were carried out on 27 prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Armagh. Fifteen prisoners were searched once, 10 were searched twice, one prisoner was searched four times, and a life sentence prisoner taking part in a pre-release programme was searched on 25 occasions. This prisoner was offered accommodation in a separate self-contained unit of the prison, which would have eliminated the need for the full reception search procedure, but she preferred to remain located with other prisoners.

No prohibited article was found during these searches, and no prisoner refused to be searched. Searches were carried out in the following circumstances:

	Number
First admission on remand and awaiting trial	10
First admission on sentence and final discharge	11
Attending remand courts (other than Armagh)	6
Bail court appearances	3
Visits to outside hospitals	1
Pre-release programme	21
Home leave scheme	12
Total	64

Nurses and Midwives

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many vacancies exist in each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland for midwives; and what percentage of funded establishment this represents.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

Health and Social Services Board	*Midwife Vacancies*	*Percentage*
Eastern	8	1·43
Northern	5	2·47
Southern	1	0·40
Western	6	2·68

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current total cost of the wages, salaries and allowances of nurses and midwives in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: Final accounts for the year ended March 1985 are not yet completed. The total cost of employees' gross taxable pay plus employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions in respect of nurses and midwives for 1984-85 is estimated to be £145·9 million.

TRANSPORT

Bus Services

11. **Mr. Straw** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received concerning the cost of providing bus services following deregulation of buses.

Mr. Ridley: A precise figure is not available but many of the representations I have received about the deregulation of local bus services have made assumptions about the effect of the policy on the cost of providing services.

13. **Mr. Heffer** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the effect on safety standards of the implementation of the Transport Bill.

Mr. David Mitchell: Some people suggested that safety standards might decline. In fact, provisions in the Bill will strengthen safety standards.

15. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his assessment of the reduction in revenue support to bus transport expected to arise from the Transport Bill.

17. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has that local authority spending on bus services will fall, without a reduction in service, following deregulation of bus services.

24. **Mr. Torney** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the effect on local authority expenditure on transport of bus deregulation.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Transport Bill is not concerned with reducing local authority spending on revenue support.

21. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what improvements to safety standards he expects to result from the enactment of the Transport Bill.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend is determined to maintain and tighten safety standards. The Bill contains various provisions to achieve this, in particular,

(a) Traffic commissioners will be able to disqualify unsatisfactory operators for an indefinite period.
(b) Traffic commissioners will be able to require operators to run only specified vehicles.
(c) *Only two vehicles will be permitted on a restricted "O" licence.*
(d) *All buses—not just public service vehicles—will be subject to spot checks and can be prohibited from further use until defects are put right.*

In addition, the number of vehicle examiners will be increased.

23. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with local authorities concerning the cost of providing bus services following deregulation of the buses.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have had a number of meetings with local authorities at which the implications of the policy have been discussed. I made clear the Government's view that overall the loss of cross-subsidy should be offset by the gains from more effective use of direct subsidy and by reduced operating costs.

30. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has from the trial areas about the effect on safety standards of the deregulation of bus services.

Mr. David Mitchell: Safety standards have been maintained in the trial areas in Norfolk, Hereford and Worcester and Devon by the vigilance of the traffic commissioners and the vehicle examiners. The Transport Bill is designed to strengthen their powers.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any evidence concerning the relationship between the size of bus operations and safety standards.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have no evidence that suggests there is any relationship between the size of bus operations and safety standards. Failure rates at annual test, although not a conclusive measure of safety standards, are not significantly different between private companies and the larger public sector operators.

A1 (Cross-over Barriers)

14. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on safety on the A1 between London and Newark in the absence of cross-over barriers.

Mrs. Chalker: Overall this part of A1 does not have a higher than average proportion of accidents involving vehicles crossing the central reservation. The need for additional safety fencing on sections of this road is already being examined.

St. Pancras-Sheffield Railway Line

16. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will discuss the operation of the St. Pancras-Sheffield railway line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The operation of individual lines is for British Rail. But I shall be happy to discuss them if the chairman wishes to raise the matter at one of our regular meetings.

Motorways (Drainage)

18. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to improve drainage on motorways.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes, improvements are being considered and evaluated as part of the continuing process of developing better designs and construction methods.

Railway Workshop Closures

19. **Mr. Robert Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he had any discussions with British Rail Engineering Ltd. management concerning its plans for workshop closures.

Mr. David Mitchell: The board informed me, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in advance of its proposals for reducing workshop capacity.

25. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has had any discussions with trade unions concerning the proposed redundancies in British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The proposed reductions in manpower are matters for British Rail and BREL, which are consulting their unions in the normal way.

National Bus Company

20. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the National Bus Company as to the effect of the Transport Bill on the pension entitlements of its employees.

Mr. Ridley: The National Bus Company has made clear to me its concern on this matter. I have repeated the Government's commitment to ensuring that the pension funds' assets are adequate at the time of privatisation to discharge their responsibilities. I shall be discussing the matter further with the NBC.

Road Maintenance

22. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how the present level of expenditure on the construction and maintenance on motorways and trunk roads compares with the levels in 1978-79.

Mrs. Chalker: Expenditure on motorway and trunk road construction and maintenance has risen from £366 million in 1978-79 to a provisional outturn in 1984-85 of £806 million. This represents an increase in cash terms of nearly 120 per cent.

Woolwich Ferry and River Thames Maintenance

26. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the future operation of the Woolwich free ferry and the maintenance of piers, tunnels and bridges on the River Thames.

Mrs. Chalker: As the hon. Member knows, it is intended that the London boroughs of Greenwich and Newham become responsible for the operation of the ferry and that responsibility for bridges and tunnels passes to the successor authority for the roads concerned.

It is now proposed that, as announced on 6 June, the piers will transfer to the Thames water authority.

Road Safety

27. **Mr. Waller** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to produce his reply to the report by the Transport Committee on road safety.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his Department's response to the Transport Committee report on road safety published on 16 January.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend will be responding shortly.

Basildon (Direction Signs)

28. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria have been used in the location of road signs in Essex and elsewhere incorporating direction to Basildon; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The criteria are that a primary route destination should be signposted from the previous such destination. So far, following agreement last year that Basildon should be a primary destination, only some place-name signs have been provided, but I have given instructions that the remaining work should be carried out as soon as possible.

Disabled Persons

29. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken to improve mobility for disabled people.

Mrs. Chalker: We have a continuing programme of measures to improve mobility for disabled people. This includes drawing up standards and guidelines, research and development, publicity and a wide range of other activities. All our work is done in close consultation with disabled people.

One major event, to which I should like to draw the attention of the House, is the "Mobility Roadshow", a motor show for disabled people which my department will

be running for the second time on June 13, 14 and 15 at the transport and road research laboratory at Crowthorne in Berkshire. I hope many hon. Members will be able to find the time to visit the show and see the wide range of developments in this field.

The Minch

31. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, following publication later in the current year of principal charts for the areas including the Minch and west of the Hebrides, he intends to issue further instructions for the purposes of excluding large crude oil carrying tankers from the Minch; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have no powers to make instructions of this sort following the publication of charts carrying information about the area of deep water to the west of the Outer Hebrides which has now been surveyed to modern standards, but I think it would be desirable if large crude oil tankers would take that route.

Motorways (Speed Control)

32. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with the current voluntary speed control of motorway public service vehicle operators.

Mrs. Chalker: The 1984 coach speed survey published last February, referred to in my reply to my hon. Friend for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) on 23 January at column *416*, showed that the 85th percentile speed for coaches travelling on motorways was 73 mph, though their average speed was under 64 mph. We do not have more recent survey results, but there is certainly still a number of coaches exceeding the speed limit by a substantial margin. I shall not be satisfied until all operators and drivers live up to their responsibilities for compliance with bus and coach speed limits and observe the Bus and Coach Council's voluntary code of practice.

One-person Operated Trains

33. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department had discussions with London Regional Transport before it was decided to extend the practice of one-person operated trains.

Mrs. Chalker: The former London Transport Executive, and the trade unions concerned, reached agreement in principle in 1983 to the extension of one person operation to the whole underground network in due course. The method and timing of its introduction on particular lines are matters for LRT in consultation with the trade unions as appropriate, and subject to the Railway Inspectorate's approval of any physical works and modifications to the rolling stock which may be necessary. The Department were kept informed of LRT's intention to extend one person operation to the east London line where it was introduced successfully on 20 May 1985.

Train Drivers

34. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the chairman of British Rail the latest information available on the effect of flexible rostering on the number of hours worked per shift by train drivers.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend and I are always willing to discuss with the chairman any subject he wishes to raise.

Driving Test

35. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for altering the current driving test arrangements.

Mrs. Chalker: I would refer my hon. Friend to the answers given to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 16 April 1985 at column *152* and to the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight on 23 May 1985 at column *533*.

Channel Fixed Link

36. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what factors will most influence his decision on competing bids received by him for the Channel fixed link.

Mr. David Mitchell: The "invitation to promoters" of a Channel fixed link published on 2 April sets out the information required by the two Governments. We shall take into account all the areas covered in that document and any other wider implications that are relevant. The decision will be based on a balance of all these factors.

Road Construction

37. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the funds allocated to the construction of new roads in 1985-86; and what was the outturn figure for each of the last three years.

Mrs. Chalker: The information requested is as follows:

Expenditure on the construction of new roads in England

£ million

	1982-83	*1983-84*	**1984-85*	*†1985-86*
National (trunk) roads	529	514	569	598
Local roads	407	456	491	502
Total	936	970	1,060	1,100

* Provisional
† Planned.

M3 Motorway

38. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the southern extension of the M3 motorway to be completed.

Mrs. Chalker: I opened the 10-mile extension of the M3 from Popham to Easton lane, Winchester on 22 May. Subject to the outcome of a public inquiry for the Bar End to Bassett section due to start on 19 June, we hope to be able to complete the motorway by 1989.

Accident Black Spots

39. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will introduce legislation to enable parish councils to erect cautionary road signs at accident black spots where highway authorities refuse to act.

Mrs. Chalker: No. It is appropriate that the highway authority should have control over any signs erected on roads for which it is responsible.

Private Hire Cars (London)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has undertaken during the past year about the licensing of private hire cars in Greater London; and when he now plans to introduce such a system.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have received a number of representations both for and against the licensing of private hire cars in London. Having consulted the Metropolitan police and the Motor Insurance Bureau, we have concluded that this question should be investigated as part of the review of taxi and hire car legislation which we proposed to start once the provisions concerning taxis in the Transport Bill are in operation.

Service Stations (Telecommunications)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what checks his officials have made on the telecommunications system at Toddington service station since the last annual inspection held on 28 June 1983;

(2) what checks his officials have made on the telecommunications system at Trowell service station since the last annual inspection held on 11 July 1983;

(3) what checks his officials have made on the telecommunications system at Leicester Forest East service station since the last annual inspection held on 10 February 1983.

Mr. Ridley: None. The three service areas are to be inspected this month.

Local Government (Consultation)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is planning to make any changes to the way in which he consults local government following the judgment in R. *v.* Secretary of State for Social Services: ex parte AMA.

Mr. Ridley: The written judgment is not yet available and I need to consider it thoroughly before commenting.

Cabotage (Italy)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he intends to make to the Italian Government about their continued denial of cabotage rights to British registered ships in spite of the recommendations of the European Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State told my hon. Friend in the answer he gave him on 3 June, the European Commission has put to the Council a proposal for a regulation which would, among other things, require all member states to open up their cabotage trades to carriers from other member states. Both when the Council discusses this proposal, and in my bilateral contacts with Italian colleagues, I shall be stressing the importance which this Government attach to the adoption of such a policy.

Ruthenium (Transport)

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the arrangements for transporting ruthenium from Harwell to hospitals in Britain; and if he is further satisfied that all the international atomic energy regulations have been observed over the past five years and that they are currently being observed, in respect of the transport of such material.

Mrs. Chalker: Movements of ruthenium, as of all radioactive materials in this country, are legally required to conform to national regulations based on the standards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I understand that there have been no consignments of ruthenium from Harwell to hospitals in this country during the past five years.

Midlands Motorway Link

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on the results of using urea as an alternative to salt as a de-icing agent on midlands links motorways during the winter of 1984-85, detailing the amounts used and the cost compared with salt.

Mrs. Chalker: Urea was successfully used as a de-icing agent on the Midland links viaducts during the 1984-85 winter. The quantity used was 1500 tonnes at a cost of £250,000. A more detailed statement about urea as a de-icing agent will be included in the interim report on the Midland links.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will place a copy of the latest midlands motorway link report in the Library.

Mrs. Chalker: I plan to do so as soon as possible.

M6 (Gravelly Hill Interchange)

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will specify the nature of the latest report by Messrs. Maunsell and Partners on maintenance below deck level at the Gravelly Hill interchange (junction 6) of the M6; when it was completed; what was the cost of the contract under which it was done; and whether he will place a copy in the Library.

Mrs. Chalker: My Interim report on the Midland links viaducts will refer to reports produced by our consultants, including those for Gravelly Hill interchange, and copies of those will be placed in the Library of the House.

The commission placed with Messrs. Maunsells and Partners is to act as the Department's consulting engineers on all the structures between Junctions 5 and 7 of the M6. Costs are not identifiable to the Gravelly Hill Interchange in isolation. The total cost of this commission during 1984-85 was £625,000.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement on the present plans for maintenance and repair of the Gravelly Hill interchange (junction 6) of the M6, listing any complete or partial lane closures due before the end of the year and estimate the likely cost of repairs and maintenance.

Mrs. Chalker: As well as routine maintenance we are planning further installation of gutters beneath deck joints on the carriageways and some work to the joints themselves. All these activities may involve partial lane closures; estimates of cost are not yet available.

Her Majesty's Coastguard

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was by grade *(a)* the authorised establishment and *(b)* numbers in post of Her Majesty's Coastguard by region in 1979, 1982 and 1984; and what for the same years was the authorised budget and spending of Her Majesty's Coastguard.

Mr. David Mitchell: The numbers of approved posts and staff in post for the dates indicated for Her Majesty's Coastguard in total are given by grade in table A. In the past approved posts have not been allocated by grade to Coastguard regions and table B therefore shows only regional totals of staff in post. Both tables include administrative support staff and part-time staff count as half.

The financial provision and expenditure for Her Majesty's Coastguard in the years requested is:

£ million

	Provision	*Expenditure*
1979-80	7·9	8·5
1982-83	15·7	15·6
1984-85	20·3	17·3

Notes:

(i) These figures include the administrative costs of Her Majesty's Coastguard, capital and current programme expenditure on Coastguard services and the Channel Navigation Information Service, and expenditure on civil search and rescue.

(ii) The expenditure for 1984-85 is an estimated outturn.

(iii) Apart from administrative costs, the major expenditure is on civil search and rescue. This is a demand led service and is the major cause of the variance between expenditure and provision.

Table A

Her Majesty's Coastguard—total non-industrial staff by grade

	1 April 1979		*1 April 1982*		*1 April 1984*	
	Approved post	*Staff in post*	*Approved posts*	*Staff in post*	*Approved posts*	*Staff in post*
Chief Coastguard	1	1	1	1	1	1
Principal Inspector	18	7	7	7	8	7
Inspector		12	11	9	10	10
District Officer	30	30	28	30	28	29
Station Officer	62	63	60	61	62	61
Coastguard Officer grade 1	469	203	250	237	230	233
Coastguard Officer		260	198	195	210	204
Principal	—	—	1	1	1	1
Higher Executive Officer	3	3	4	4	2	2
Executive Officer	3	3	10	10	10	10
Writer	12	10	—	—	—	—
Clerical Officer	5	7	11	11	11	11
Clerical Assistant	3	3	6	6	4	4
Personal Secretary	1	1	1	1	1	—
Typist	5·5	8·5	5	6	5·5	5·5
Unallocated	—	—	—	—	2·5	—
Total	613·5	612·5	593	579	586	578·5

There are also 8,500 Auxiliary Coastguards enrolled as at 31 March 1985.

Table B

Her Majesty's Coastguard—total non-industrial staff by region

	1 April 1979 Staff in post	*1 April 1982 Staff in post*	*1 April 1984 Staff in post*
Headquarters in Training	38·0	38·0	34·5
Aberdeen	80·0	88·5	96·5
Yarmouth	89·0	78·5	74·5
Dover	76·0	86·5	83·5
Falmouth	154·5	107·5	100·5
Swansea	113·5	97·5	99·5
Clyde	61·5	82·5	91·5
Total	612·5	579·0	578·0

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will detail the specific responsibilities of Her Majesty's Coastguard for the detection and prevention of drug smuggling; how many officers have specific drug detection training, and how many intercepts *(a)* at sea and *(b)* on or inshore were made for suspected drug-smuggling in each of the past three years.

Mr. David Mitchell: Her Majesty's Coastguard is essentially a live-saving service maintained to undertake the co-ordination of maritime search and rescue. It has no responsibilities specifically for the detection and prevention of drug smuggling. Accordingly, no officers are trained for such duties nor have any intercepts for suspected drug smuggling been made during the past three years.

Her Majesty's Coastguard affords full co-operation to the Board of Customs and Excise and to other law enforcement authorities.

London Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria he will adopt in assessing whether the operation or ownership of the London docklands light railway should be transferred to a non-public body.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend will reach a decision, in agreement with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, on what course is most in the public interest.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what total estimated public investment there will have been on the completion in working order of those sections of the London docklands light railway currently authorised by Parliament.

Mrs. Chalker: I expect the cost of the docklands light railway authorised by the London Docklands Railways Acts 1984 and 1985 (Tower Hill to Island Gardens and Poplar to Stratford) to be close to the cash limit of £77 million.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what requests or instructions he has made to London Regional Transport concerning the level and structure of fares and availability of the current system of travel cards on the London docklands light railway.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend gave the chairman of LRT general guidance on fares policy in his statement of objectives dated 20 July 1984, on 23 July 1984 at columns *373-74*. We have made no requests and given no instructions specifically related to the docklands light railway.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans have been presented to him and what requests he has made to London Regional Transport concerning the extension of the London docklands light railway to the area of the royal docks.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend has neither requested nor received any proposals for such an extension. I understand that London Regional Transport and the London Docklands Development Corporation are preparing plans for submission to the Government in due course.

Motorways (Lighting)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made in the course of his review of the lighting requirements of motorways and, in particular, the M25 of studies in Belgium of the correlation between low lighting levels and enhanced incidence of accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The results of the Belgian study are subject to some reservations but their trend is similar to that identified in a transport road research laboratory study for 30 mph roads. Due account is being given to this conclusion in the Department's review of motorway lighfing.

Aerial Spraying

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Transport within how many feet of *(a)* a dwelling house, *(b)* a garden, *(c)* a nature reserve, *(d)* a school or its grounds and *(e)* a hospital, any crop spraying operation may be carried on from the air; and which occupiers or users of buildings are notified in advance.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority imposes the following requirements on aerial crop spraying operators:

(a) they must not fly within 200 ft of dwelling houses and gardens, and all occupiers of adjacent land must be notified in advance, in writing.

(b) the Nature Conservancy Council must be consulted before spraying within ¾ nautical mile of a national nature reserve or site of special scientific interest.

(c) advance warning must be given to any school, hospital or similar institution within 500 ft of a potential flight path.

Roads and Motorways (Study)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place copies of the joint department and local authority study on responsibilities for national roads and motorways in the Library.

Mr. Ridley: I have done so today.

Oxford Circus (Fire)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest estimate of the cost to London Regional Transport of the fire at Oxford Circus on 23 November 1984.

Mr. Ridley: The cost of bringing the station into operation after the fire is now estimated at £2·4 million. The cost of additional work to refurbish the station to current standards is estimated to be £2·75 million. The net cost to LRT is not yet known as it is the subject of insurance claims.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the inspector's report into the fire at Oxford Circus underground station last autumn.

Mr. Ridley: I have received reports from LRT and the London Fire Brigade on their investigation of the fire at Oxford Circus underground station. I understand that LRT propose to issue a statement about its findings as soon as it is ready to do so. The Railway Inspectorate will be reporting to me on the measures being taken to prevent a recurrence when it has completed its current discussions with LRT and LFB on the implementation of the latter's recommendations. Since no formal inquiry under the railway legislation was ordered into the incident there will be no published report by the inspectorate.

Okehampton Bypass

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether it is his intention to proceed with the northern route of the Okehampton bypass.

Mrs. Chalker: It is too early to make a firm announcement.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 11 June 1985

HOME DEPARTMENT

Video Works (Classification Authority)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will lay before Parliament his proposals for the designation of persons to act as the authority responsible for making arrangements for the classification of video works under the Video Recordings Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brittan: I have today laid before both Houses my proposals for the designation under section 4(1) of the Video Recordings Act 1984 of those persons who on designation will be the authority responsible for the matters set out in that section of the Act. I propose to designate the Earl of Harewood, the Lord Birkett, Miss Monica Sims and Mr. James Ferman, respectively the president, vice-presidents and director of the British Board of Film Classification (formerly the British Board of Film Censors). The board will be responsible for determining whether or not video works are suitable to be classified, having special regard to the likelihood of classified video works being viewed in the home, and for carrying out the other arrangements specified in section 4(1) of the Video Recordings Act.

I have placed in the Library the text of a letter I intend to send at the time of designation to each member of the authority. Attached to the letter are the Video Appeals Committee provisions containing the arrangements for appeals, in accordance with section 4(3) of the Act, against determinations by the board, with which I am satisfied, and the tariff of fees which I have approved for the purposes of section 4(5) and (6) of the Act.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I propose to bring the criminal provisions of the Act into force on 1 September 1985 in respect of all video works where a video recording containing the video work has not been sold, let on hire or offered for sale or hire in the United Kingdom to the public before that date.

We intend next to bring those provisions of the Act into force for remaining classes of works in a series of stages. This is to allow sufficient time for the classification of existing video works to be undertaken before dealings in them become liable to the criminal sanctions for which the Act provides. Under this scheme, those video works which have caused most concern will be liable to be classified in the first stage. The stages referred to above are as follows:

1 September 1986: all existing works which are predominantly in English except those which are substantially the same as a moving picture produced on showing a film registered on or after 1 January 1940 under section 9 of the Films Act 1960 or previous comparable enactments.

1 March 1987: all works predominantly in English except those which are substantially the same as a moving picture produced on showing a film registered between 1 January 1940 and 31 December 1979.

1 September 1987: all works predominantly in English except those which are substantially the same as a moving picture produced on showing a film registered between 1 January 1940 and 31 December 1974.

1 March 1988: all works predominantly in English except those which are substantially the same as a moving picture produced on showing a film registered between 1 January 1940 and 31 December 1969.

1 September 1988: all remaining works, including foreign language works.

I propose to lay before Parliament very shortly labelling regulations, under section 8 of the Act, to come into effect on 1 September 1985.

Prisons

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the recreational facilities provided in each new prison opened since 1979 and the cost of such provision.

Mr. Mellor: The cost of providing recreational activities such as television, reading and games within general house association areas cannot be separately identified. At Her Majesty's prison Frankland a sports hall of about 1,249 sq m and a sports field of about 46,000 sq m have been provided at a cost, at February 1981 prices, of about £0·86 million. Security perimeter and lighting to the sports field cost an additional £0·53 million. At Her Majesty's prison Wayland a sports hall of about 1,162 sq m and a sports field of about 58,200 sq m have been provided at a cost, at December 1984 prices, of about £0·69 million. Security perimeter and lighting to the sports field cost an additional £0·42 million.

Mr. Parvaiz Khan

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which Mr. Parvaiz Khan received injuries whilst in custody at the Old Bailey on 22 May;

(2) if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which Mr. Parvaiz Khan was injured on Wednesday 22 May during the lunchtime adjournment at his trial at the Old Bailey.

Mr. Mellor: The incident is being investigated by the City of London police and it would not be appropriate for me to comment at this stage.

Local Government (Consultation)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is planning to make any changes to the way in which he consults local government following the judgment in R. v. Secretary of State for Social Services; ex parte AMA.

Mr. Mellor: This was a case concerning housing benefit. We shall need to study the written judgment, which is not yet available, before we can decide what the implications for the Department might be.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of entries in each of the indexes of the police national computer and the number of accesses to those indexes over the last convenient period of time.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The number of entries in each of the police national computer indexes at 18 May 1985 and the number of accesses by terminals to those indexes in the week ending 18 May 1985 were as follows:

Index	*Number of entries*	*Number of accesses*
Stolen and suspect vehicles	349,620	*380,373
Chassis, engine and plant numbers	542,713	19,066
Vehicle owners	35,610,660	*380,373
Criminal names	4,974,479	†‖172,648
Fingerprint	3,512,434	†20,549
Convictions	467,377	‡0
Wanted and missing persons	109,659	‖170,234
Disqualified drivers	298,436	‖29,015
Crime pattern analysis	¶11,500	¶1,000
Major investigations	58,148	17,480

* No separate figures are kept. Most on-line transactions involve access to both files.

† Includes some 5,000 criminal names transactions which display fingerprint data.

‡ Not yet live.

‖ Includes multiple index inquiries (140,000).

¶ Approximate.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of entries in each of the sub-categories of the stolen and suspect vehicle index of the police national computer and the maximum and minimum number of entries in each of those sub categories over the last year.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The number of entries in each of the sub-categories of the stolen and suspect vehicle index of the police national computer, together with the maximum and minimum number of entries for the previous 12 months, are as follows:

Category	*1 June 1985*	*Maximum in previous 12 months*	*Minimum in previous 12 months*
Lost or Stolen	256,943	256,943	220,277
Obtained by Deception	553	557	508
Found or Apparently Abandoned	23,095	24,651	19,693
Removed into Police Custody	10,322	10,596	9,542
Removed by the Police from One Street to Another Street	294	401	100
Repossessed by Finance Company	93	125	76
Suspected of being Involved in Particular Incident for example Crime	3,140	3,150	2,285
Owned or Used by Police	6,296	6,815	6,296
Of Interest to the Police for example Owned by Known Criminals or Missing Persons	35,094	35,800	33,724
Seen or Checked by the Police in Noteworthy Circumstances (for example at Night in an Area where a Series of Crimes is under Investigation)	11,647	12,285	7,506
Details Not to be Passed Over Open Radio (for example, Police Vehicles Used in Observation Duties)	3,855	3,937	3,799

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of entries in each of the sub-categories of the wanted and missing person's index of the police national computer and the maximum and minimum number of entries in each of those sub-categories over the last year.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The number of entries in each of the sub-categories of the wanted and missing person's index on the police national computer, together with maximum and minimum figures for the 12-month period ending may 1985, are as follows:

Category	*May 1985*	*Maximum in previous 12 months*	*Minimum in previous 12 months*
Wanted Persons	29,188	29,218	28,872
Failed to Appear in Court	19,327	20,505	19,327
Suspected of Offence	3,676	3,707	3,560
Impending Proceedings	137	137	30
Deserter from Armed Forces	10,339	10,411	10,339
Location desired for example for service of summons	39,314	40,829	35,666
Missing	2,089	2,152	1,816
Found	17	42	12
Absentee from Local Authority Care	639	807	571
Absconded from Hospital	55	55	39
Absconded from Youth Custody	90	90	79
Absconded from Prison	365	376	339
Absconded from Remand	35	36	27
Absconded from School	117	130	110
Absconded from Detention	2	7	1
Recalled to Youth Custody	2	12	2
Recalled to Prison	226	238	186
Recalled to Detention	0	0	0
Notify if in Custody	162	441	162

Police Complaints Commissioner

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of decorating the premises being prepared for the Police Complaints Commissioner.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Final accounts for fitting out and decorating the Police Complaints Authority's premises have yet to be received. I shall write to the hon. Member in due course.

Prison Statistics

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female prisoners are living (i) two to a cell and (ii) three to a cell at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: On 12 May there were 12,492 males and 208 females held two to a cell, and 4,968 males and no females held three to a cell.

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the total number of inmates in youth custody centres at the latest available date;

(2) what is the total prison population at the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 May there were 46,352 persons in prison department establishments in England and Wales, of whom 7,014 were in youth custody centres.

Syrian Embassy (Bomb Incident)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the incident involving a bomb outside the Syrian embassy on 4 June; and whether any Arab terrorist group has claimed responsibility for it.

Mr. Brittan: During the evening of 3 June staff from the Syrian embassy noticed a bag on the steps of the embassy in Belgrave square, London. They thought it suspicious and sought assistance from the police. It was found to be an explosive device and an explosives officer carried out a controlled explosion to disrupt its initiating mechanism. On examination it was found that its detonator had previously exploded, but failed to set off the explosive to which it was attached. There has been no verifiable claim of responsibility and police inquiries are continuing.

Prison Hospitals (Complaints Procedure)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he plans to introduce a complaints system for prison hospitals similar to that proposed for National Health Service hospitals in the Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Leeds Prison

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a further statement on the extension of Leeds prison in the light of the redesignation of Hull and Thorp Arch institutions.

Mr. Mellor: It is intended to go ahead with an extension of Leeds prison subject to the outcome of an inquiry on road closure proposals to be held on 19 June at the Civic Hall, Leeds, under section 209 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

Prisoners (Diet)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the dietary scale for feeding prison inmates was last reviewed; and whether the scale is in accordance with current nutritional standards.

Mr. Brittan: The dietary scale for the inmates of penal establishments in England and Wales was reviewed by a prison department working party last year. The review showed that the diet was on the whole satisfactory but that some minor changes could usefully be made to the scale to make the food more palatable and to bring the scale into line with the recommendations of the "Report of the National Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education 1983" and the "Report on Diet and Cardiovascular Disease" issued by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy. Copies of the working party's report have been placed in the Library. Arrangemens are in hand to bring the new scale into use later this year.

Drug Addicts

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will elaborate on the information provided to the Home Affairs Committee on the number of narcotic drug addicts notified to his Deprtment during 1984.

Mr. Brittan: Information for 1984 on notified drug addicts seizures of controlled drugs and drug offenders will be published in a Home Office statistical bulletin during the summer. Some provisional information on new addicts is, however, available now. This confirms the indications of the likely level of increase given in the recent Home Office publication "Tackling Drug Misuse: A Summary of the Government's Strategy", and in my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State's evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs. The provisional figure for new addicts notified during 1984 is 5,370 a 28 per cent. increase on 1983 (4,186). This was the fourth successive year in which there has been a substantial increase, although the increase was less than the 50 per cent. rise between 1982 and 1983. The table gives the provisional numbers of new addicts notified in each police force area in 1984. Corresponding figures for the years 1978 to 1983 are given in table 3.11 of "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs, United Kingdom, Supplementary Tables 1983", a copy of which is in the Library. The proportion of new addicts who were reported as addicted to heroin, alone or with other drugs, was about 90 per cent. in 1984, continuing the steady increase in this proportion during the last six years—it was about 60 per cent. in 1978. Indications are that notifications of former addicts also increased by about a quarter between 1983 and 1984.

New narcotic drug addicts notified to the Home Office during 1984 by police force area

United Kingdom	*Number of persons (provisional)**
ENGLAND	
. Avon and Somerset	110

United Kingdom	Number of persons (provisional)*
Bedfordshire	40
Cambridgeshire	20
Cheshire	95
Cleveland	5
Cumbria	35
Derbyshire	35
Devon and Cornwall	30
Dorset	25
Durham	5
Essex	80
Gloucestershire	10
Greater Manchester	215
Hampshire	65
Hertfordshire	55
Humberside	25
Kent	45
Lancashire	110
Leicestershire	15
Lincolnshire	5
Merseyside	480
Metropolitan Police District (including City of London)	2,400
Norfolk	95
Northamptonshire	20
Northumbria	40
North Yorkshire	5
Nottinghamshire	20
South Yorkshire	70
Staffordshire	35
Suffolk	10
Surrey	60
Sussex	135
Thames Valley	95
Warwickshire	20
West Mercia	40
West Midlands	75
West Yorkshire	60
Wiltshire	15
Total for England	4,705
WALES	
Dyfed-Powys	†—
Gwent	30
North Wales	20
South Wales	55
Total for Wales	105
SCOTLAND	
Central	10
Dumfries and Galloway	5
Fife	5
Grampian	10
Lothian and Borders	165
Northern	5
Strathclyde	310
Tayside	40
Total for Scotland	550
Northern Ireland	10
TOTAL FOR UNITED KINGDOM	5,370

* Rounded to the nearest 5.
† Less than 5.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Overseas Development Administration (Document Leaks)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Attorney-General if the investigation of possible offences in respect of documents alleged to have been leaked from the Overseas Development Administration has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Investigations which have been carried out by the Overseas Development Administration have resulted in an admission by a junior official of that Department, Mr. Geoffrey Dennis, that he had communicated a number of the Department's documents to an hon. Member of this House to whom he was not authorised to communicate them. The papers on the case were referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who in turn consulted me, for consideration of the possible prosecution of Mr. Dennis for an offence under the Official Secrets Acts. In the circumstances of this case it was decided that it was not necessary to have recourse to criminal proceedings.

PRIME MINISTER

EC (Budgetary Control)

Q37. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she remains satisfied with the progress made in providing machinery to enforce strict budgetary control in the spending of the Common Market in accordance with the decisions made at the Fontainebleau Council of Ministers meeting; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The first stage in respect of 1986, the reference framework, is due to be discussed at the ECOFIN council on 11 June.

Soviet Jewry

Q40. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on her meeting arranged for 12 June with the delegates to the conference of parliamentary spouses for Soviet Jewry; and what action she hopes will ensue to assist Soviet Jews who wish to emigrate to Israel.

The Prime Minister: My meeting with the delegates to this conference will provide an opportunity to reiterate the Government's commitment to the cause of human rights and individual freedoms and to express our concern about the many Soviet Jews who have applied to emigrate and who are not allowed to do so. These and other matters touching on human rights in the Soviet Union are regularly raised by British Ministers with Soviet representatives. We shall ensure that the subject continues to figure on the East-West agenda until the Soviet Union lives up to its international commitments in this important area.

Falkland Islands (Fishing)

Q76. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what representations Her Majesty's Government have received from Lord Shackleton about the future of fishing in the area of the Falklands.

The Prime Minister: The noble Lord, Lord Shackleton, has from time to time made public statements giving his views on Falkland's fisheries.

Engagements

Mr. Holt asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 11 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I was present at Victoria station to meet President de la Madrid of Mexico at the beginning of his state visit to this country. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall be attending a state banquet given by Her Majesty the Queen in honour of President de la Madrid.

King Hussein of Jordan (Meeting)

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent meeting with King Hussein of Jordan.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 7 June 1985, c. *263*]: I had a useful exchange of views with King Hussein on 7 June on bilateral and regional topics. We noted with satisfaction the warm and close ties between our two countries and reviewed latest developments in the search for peace in the middle east. I reiterated our full support for King Hussein's initiatives to bring about negotiations for a peaceful solution on the basis of UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338.

WALES

Dental Technicians

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many dental technicians *(a)* in number and *(b)* whole time equivalents were employed by health authorities in Wales to 30 September 1984; and what conditions apply for private contract work.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: As at 30 September 1984, 48 dental technicians (whole-time equivalent 47·2) were employed by health authorities in Wales. There is nothing to prevent dental technicians undertaking private contract work but this must not adversely affect the service they give to the NHS.

Stray and Killer Dogs

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the operation of the present legislation regarding stray and killer dogs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The consultation paper published last November records that the Government favour changes in the law that will promote responsible dog ownership.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Textile and Clothing Industry

78. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate he has made of the effect on jobs in the United Kingdom textile and clothing industry of the accession to the EEC of Spain and Portugal.

Mr. Trippier: None. Any such estimate would be highly speculative. The existing restrictions on certain textile and clothing imports from Spain and Portugal to the Community market will, under agreed transitional arrangements, be phased out over a period of up to four years. Much will depend on the ability of United Kingdom firms to anticipate the effects of their accession as well as other developments occurring in the pattern of trade in these goods.

Burdens on Business

79. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the recommendations of the report on burdens on business are likely to be implemented.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister without Portfolio is leading our drive to follow the recommendations up with a view to reaching early decisions.

Postage Stamps

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if consideration has been given to the extension of the right to sell postage stamps from retail outlets not incorporating a post office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The production and sale of postage stamps are the operational responsibility of the Post Office, which I understand places no restrictions on their resale.

Mr. Bill Cockburn

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which Mr. Bill Cockburn, executive Post Office board member for operations, accepted also a post as director of Vat Watkins Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Mr. Cockburn accepted appointment to Vat Watkins Ltd. as a non-executive director after seeking my right hon. Friend's prior approval in accordance with schedule 1 to the Post Office Act 1969.

Nationalised Industries (Directors)

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if there is any restriction on executive directors of nationalised industries for which he is responsible taking up additional board appointments in private industry.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Under the legislation applying respectively to a British Shipbuilders, the British Steel Corporation and the Post Office, my right hon. Friend is required to satisfy himself that, upon appointment, a

member of the board will have no such financial or other interest as is likely to affect prejudicially the exercise and performance of his functions as a board member. Subsequently, board members are required to obtain my right hon. Friend's prior approval before accepting directorships.

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the executive directors of nationalised industries for which he is responsible who additionally are directors of private companies together with the nationalised industry which employs them and the private companies of which they are directors.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The following have company directorships in the private sector (excluding those where the board member is a nominee of the corporation or an associate company):

British Shipbuilders

Mr. J Graham Day (Chairman and Chief Executive) is a non-executive director of Misener Holdings Ltd.

British Steel Corporation

Sir Robert Haslam (Chairman) is part-time Chairman of Tate and Lyle plc.

Mr. Sambrook is Chairman of the Iron and Trades Insurance Group.

Post Office

Mr. W. Cockburn (Member for Royal Mail Operations) is a non-executive director of V A T Watkins Ltd.

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has issued guidance to executive board members of nationalised industries for which he is responsible about their rights to accept in addition directorships of private companies.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Board Members of nationalised industries for which my right hon. Friend is responsible are made aware on appointment of their obligations with regard to accepting directorships.

Post Office

Mr. McWilliam asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has appointed any part-time executive directors to the Post Office Board.

Mr. Norman Lamont: All members of the Post Office Board are appointed by my right hon. Friend. The present part-time members are:

Miss E Cole
Sir Clifford Cornford KCB
Mr. D O Gladwin CBE JP
Mr. D Hodson
Mr. P E Moody CBE
Mr. S Wainwright CBE

Samanala Wewa (Dam)

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will ensure that all the necessary credit and aid facilities are made available to ensure that British contractors are able to sign the contract with the Sri Lankan Government for the construction of the hydro-electric dam at Samanala Wewa.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The provision of aid and credit facilities in support of British contractors in pursuit of this contract is currently under consideration. The case involves complex issues and a final decision will only be taken when all aspects of the case have been thoroughly examined.

Manufactures (Exports)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the increase in the value of Britain's exports of manufactures and all goods and services, respectively, to France, Germany, Holland, Denmark, the Republic of Ireland, Belgium, Japan and the United States of America, respectively, between 1979 and 1984, expressed in percentage terms.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Data relating to exports of manufactures and total goods are in the table. Information on services for individual countries is not available but the overall increase between 1979 and 1984 was 46 per cent. compared with 50 per cent. and 73 per cent. for manufactures and total goods respectively.

Increase in Value of United Kingdom Exports 1979-1984

	Manufactures	*Visible*
France	50	134
F R Germany	78	77
Netherlands	33	100
Denmark	23	18
Irish Republic	13	33
Belgium/Luxembourg	49	61
Japan	53	53
United States	116	154

Fairey Engineering Ltd.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current status of the permission given to Fairey Engineering Ltd. to tender to refurbish a research nuclear reactor near Santiago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Government Expenditure

Mr. Merchant asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total Government expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development definition in the years 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Peter Rees: The OECD definition expresses total Government outlays as a percentage of gross domestic product. Government outlays mainly consists of current disbursements and gross capital formation. This definition is narrower than that used for public expenditure.

On the OECD definition, Government outlays were 43·3 per cent. of GDP in 1982 and 43·1 per cent. in 1983. Figures for 1984 are not yet available.

Local Government (Consultation)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is planning to make any changes to the way in which he consults local government following the judgment in R. *v.* Secretary of State for Social Services: ex parte AMA.

Mr. Peter Rees: The written judgment is not yet available and I would need to consider it thoroughly before commenting.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Lester asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the practical difficulties which he has identified as being involved with the possible raising of the value added tax threshold.

Mr. Hayhoe: The major obstacle to any significant increase in the VAT registration threshold is the EC sixth VAT directive, which restricts increases in the threshold to those which maintain its value in real terms. The increase to £19,500 announced in this year's Budget was the maximum permissible within that restriction.

Drugs Smuggling

Mr. Rowe asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will increase the Customs and Excise resources dedicated to the prevention of drugs smuggling.

Mr. Hayhoe: I recognise the considerable contribution made by Customs and Excise officers to the prevention of drugs smuggling. I have decided to authorise Customs and Excise to appoint 50 additional key staff to enable it to increase its highly successful force of specialist investigators. I do not underrate the valuable work of the non-specialist Customs preventive officers and I intend to continue to evaluate the results of the additional 160 officers deployed by customs at ports and airports.

Bank of England Printing Works, Loughton

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect of the introduction of the £1 coin on employment at the Bank of England printing works in Loughton; to what extent any redundancies have been voluntary; and whether there is to be any redeployment of Loughton personnel elsewhere in the bank's service.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

8. **Mr. Straw** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many fewer people are currently employed in the United Kingdom than there were in May 1979.

15. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many more people were in employment in May 1979 than at the present time.

Mr. Tom King: Between June 1979 and March 1983 the number of people in the employed labour force in the United Kingdom fell by an estimated 1·8 million. More recently however, the number of people in work has been rising and between March 1983 and December 1984 the United Kingdom employed labour force increased by 600,000.

16. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures.

17. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest number of people unemployed.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 9 May, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,241,000.

20. **Mr. Kilroy-Silk** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the numbers of people who have been unemployed for over 12 months; and what was the figure in April 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 11 April 1985 the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 1,334,000. The corresponding figure for April 1979, relating to unemployed registrants, was 367,000.

23. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are in employment at the latest date compared to June 1983; how many people are engaged in training schemes at the latest date compared to June 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The employed labour force in Great Britain was estimated as 23,627,000 in December 1984, the latest date for which figures are available. The corresponding figure for June 1983 was 23,040,000. These figures are seasonally adjusted. There were at least 300,000 people engaged in training schemes administered by the Manpower Services Commission at the end of March 1985, the latest date for which figures are available. This compares with an estimated 208,000 at the end of June 1983. In addition there were a number of people engaged on specialist and experimental training schemes.

28. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest unemployment figures; and if he will make a statement.

55. **Mr. Jack Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest number of people unemployed; and what that is as a percentage of the workforce.

62. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current numbers unemployed; and what this is as a proportion of the work force.

74. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the latest national unemployment figures.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 9 May 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,240,947, representing an unemployment rate of 13·4 per cent.

38. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many fewer people are currently employed in the United Kingdom than there were in May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Between June 1979 (figures are not available for May) and December 1984, the employed labour force in the United Kingdom, that is employees in employment plus the self-employed plus Her Majesty's Forces, fell by an estimated 1,202,000.

49. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been placed in work in the northern region by the professional and executive register in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In the financial year ending 31 March 1985, Professional and Executive Recruitment placed 616 people in work in Cleveland, Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and Durham.

50. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest number of people unemployed; and how many of them are aged 50 to 60 years.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 11 April 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,272,565, of whom 508,703 were aged between 50 and 59 years.

57. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are now unemployed in Lambeth; and how many have been unemployed for more than 12 months.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 11 April 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the London borough of Lambeth was 25,989. Of these it is provisionally estimated that about 11,000 had been unemployed for more than 12 months. This figure includes an estimate for those whose claims are not dealt with by computer.

60. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current total number of people employed; and how many of those are in full-time employment.

Mr. Alan Clark: In December 1984, the latest date for which information is available, there were an estimated 20,832,000 employees in employment in Great Britain, 11,593,000 of whom were males and 9,239,000 were females. It is estimated that of the total females, 4,957,000 worked full time. A corresponding figure for full-time males is not available.

63. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current rate of unemployment; and how this compares with the figure for June 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 9 May 1985, the unemployment rate in the United Kingdom was 13·4 per cent. compared with 5·1 per cent. in June 1979.

66. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the numbers of people who have been unemployed for over one year, two years, and three years, respectively; and what plans the Government have for re-training or re-employing those who do not find places in the community programme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In April 1985 there were 1,334,161 claimants who had been unemployed for over one year, including 790,086 unemployed for more than two years and 484,314 for over three years. Our White Paper, "Employment: The Challenge for the Nation" (Cmnd. 9474) describes the current range of employment and training measures and explains our strategy to achieve sustained economic growth. It is only through such growth that more permanent jobs for unemployed people will be created.

68. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently in work in the United Kingdom; and what were the figures for May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: In December 1984, the latest date for which information is available, there were an estimated 24,154,000 people in the United Kingdom in the employed labour force (that is, employees in employment plus the self-employed plus Her Majesty's Forces). The corresponding figure for June 1979 (May is not available) was 25,356,000. The figures are adjusted to take account of seasonal variations.

70. **Mr. Garrett** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were in full-time employment in May 1979; and what is the present figure.

Mr. Alan Clark: in December 1984, the latest date for which information is available, out of a total of 9,239,000 female employees in employment in Great Britain, 4,957,000 worked full-time. The total male figure of 11,593,000 is not broken down to full-time and part-time. In June 1979, the corresponding figures were 9,455,000 total females of which 5,585,000 worked full-time, together with a total of 13,183,000 male employees in employment.

76. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Employment by what number the working age population and the number of unemployed pensions increased between 1975 and 1979 and between 1980 and 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is estimated that between 1975 and 1979 the working age population of Great Britain increased by 785,000, while unemployment rose by 332,200 over the same period. The corresponding estimated increases between 1980 and 1984 in Great Britain were 1,151,000 and 1,447,900 respectively.

The comparisons of unemployment are affected by the 1983 Budget provisions which mean that some men, mainly aged 60 years and over, no longer need to sign on in order to receive supplementary benefits or national insurance credits. It is estimated that some 160,000 men were affected in Great Britain between April and August 1983.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is satisfied that the methods of calculating the employed labour force measure correctly the self-employed and part-timers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimates of the self-employed are obtained from the census of population updated by the labour force survey.

Estimates of employees in employment, with full and part-time employees separately identified for each sex, are obtained from the triennial census of employment. These are updated, with part-time female employees separately identified, using quarterly sample surveys of employers and the labour force survey.

The methods used are described in detail in the article "Revised Employment Estimates for 1981 to 1984" published in the March 85 edition of *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is in the Library. The estimates are, of course, reviewed as further data become available.

I am satisfied that the estimates provide a good guide to the number of the self-employed and part-time employees. Because sampling techniques are used the estimates are subject to some imprecision. The Department's statisticians continually review the methods to try to improve the estimates in terms of accuracy and cost-effectiveness.

Industrial Democracy

10. **Mr. Martin** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any proposals to put to his European Economic Community counterparts to improve democracy in the work place.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We believe that Community-wide action would be inappropriate. Within the United Kingdom we are firmly committed to an effective voluntary approach to employee involvement and participation.

30. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to encourage progress in worker participation under section 1 of the Employment Act 1982.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) on 10 June 1985.

Employment Prospects

14. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement concerning the current levels of employment and prospects for its increase.

Mr. Tom King: The employed labour force in Great Britain is estimated at 23,627,000 in December 1984 some 613,000 higher than in March 1983. We expect the growth in employment to continue.

Skillcentres

18. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he is satisfied with the performance and numbers of skillcentres.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes. I welcome the reorganisation of the network which plans to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and value for money offered by skillcentres. These objectives are in line with our adult training strategy which aims to substantially increase the number of adults helped to train.

Young Persons (Wages)

19. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the percentage change in young people's wages as a proportion of adult wages since 1979 for boys and for girls.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The earnings of boys relative to men fell by 12 per cent. and those of girls relative to women fell by 13 per cent. between April 1979 and April 1984.

Community Programme

21. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make money and places available under the community programme for domestic assistance for elderly and disabled people, along the lines of the home help system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Some 20 per cent. of community programme projects already provide assistance for elderly and disabled people. This assistance can be increased because we are expanding the programme by 100,000 places to 230,000 filled places by June 1986.

31. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what provision will be made for the expansion of the community programme in Greater London.

33. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what provision will be made for the expansion of the community programme in the south-west.

43. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the development of the community programme in the east midlands.

69. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what provision will be made for the expansion of the community programme in the east midlands.

71. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the expansion of the community programme in the west midlands.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The community programme is being expanded by 100,000 places to 230,000 places by the end of May 1986. Some 50,000 of these additional places should be available by the end of the year, and I set out current regional targets in my reply to my hon. Friend the member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) on 30 April 1985 at column *105*.

75. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the community programme in Leicester.

Mr. Peter Morrison: 990 places on the community programme have been available for the city of Leicester during the last 12 months. The expansion of the programme by 100,000 places nationally over the next 12 months enables significant increases to be made in all areas.

Hosiery and Knitwear Industry

22. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will expand facilities for the retraining of adults to take up skilled employment in the hosiery and knitwear industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I am aware of the recruitment difficulties reported by the hosiery and knitwear industry. These must be primarily for the industry to resolve but, following a question from my hon. Friend, the member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), I asked the Manpower Services Commission to report on the problems in the Leicester area. I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as this report is available.

Political Levy

24. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now introduce legislation to provide for contracting in to the political levy as opposed to contracting out.

Mr. Peter Bottomley The current series of political fund ballots provides an important opportunity for union members to decide for themselves whether their unions should continue to spend money on party political matters. Where ballots produce a majority in favour of a political

fund, unions are under a statutory duty to notify members of their right to contract out of the political levy and to inform them that a standard exemption notice may be obtained from their union or the certification officer. Union members will also wish to ensure that subsequent decisions on the use to which political funds are put conform to the policies on which campaigns have been conducted for their maintenance. Only on this basis can members freely and effectively decide for themselves whether or not to pay the political levy, which was the object of my right hon. Friend's discussions with the TUC. As we made clear to the TUC, the Government reserve the right to legislate if the voluntary approach does not prove effective.

Community Industry Scheme

25. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is satisfied with the occupancy rate on the community industry scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes. Community Industry Ltd. has contracted to provide 7,000 job opportunities for personally and socially disadvantaged young people. The latest figures show a national occupancy rate of 96 per cent.

Wages Councils

26. **Mr. Evenett** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what responses his Department has received to the consultative document on wages councils.

41. **Mr. Prescott** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received on the future of wages councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) earlier today.

27. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will now estimate the effect on the employment of young people of the abolition of wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is general agreement that the abolition of wages councils would slow down pay increases resulting in an increase in employment for both young people and adults. Employment opportunities for young people are initially limited to the balance between the value of their contribution and the costs of their employment, including pay levels.

32. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received any further representations from Trades Union Congress affiliated unions regarding the future of wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have received 693 responses to our consultative paper on wages councils from a number of trade unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress.

54. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received any representations from employees covered by wages councils, or their representatives, in favour of abolishing wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes.

67. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received about the maintenance of retail trades wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations from employers' bodies, trade unions and others about the maintenance of retail trades wages councils. These are being studied.

Youth Training Scheme

29. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what progress is being made in his discussions relating to the expansion of the youth training scheme into a two-year course for school leavers.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Manpower Services Commission is continuing discussions with employers, trade unions and others about the extension of the youth training scheme, and hopes to make detailed recommendations by the end of June.

36. **Mr. Randall** asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the director general of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the second year of the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend and I have no plans to do so at this stage. The Confederation of British Industry is closely involved in the preparation by the Manpower Services Commission of proposals for a two-year youth training scheme; and I have recently attended three regional conferences organised by the confederation at which the development of the scheme was discussed.

72. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the expansion of the youth training scheme to two years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Over 200 organisations and individuals have commented on the proposed extension of the youth training scheme. Virtually all support the proposal.

59. **Mr. Squire** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of discussions with employers' organisations regarding the extension of the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Confederation of British Industry is closely involved with the Manpower Services Commission in planning the new scheme. In addition, many employers and employers' organisations have commented on the proposal to extend the youth training scheme. Virtually all support the proposal.

Wages Statistics

34. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what numbers of workers in full-time employment earn less than £100 per week.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Estimates of the numbers of full-time adult employees with gross weekly earnings of less than £100 for a full week in April 1984 are published in table 29 of "New Earnings Survey", part A. A copy is in the Library.

Trade Unions (Ballots)

35. **Mr. Hanley** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many unions have rule books which now comply with the provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984 relating to elections to the union executive.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A number of trade unions have made, or are considering making changes to their rule books to comply with this aspect of trade union legislation. Some specific examples are listed in my hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) on Tuesday 12 February 1985 at columns *135-6*. In some instances changes will not be required as existing rules already comply with the legislation.

The duties imposed on trade unions by part I of the Trade Union Act 1984 will apply in all cases, irrespective of rule books, from 1 October 1985.

61. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he is satisfied that the provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984 relating to ballots on political funds will ensure adequate opportunities for all trade union members to cast their votes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The certification officer will not approve rules for political fund ballots unless they provide that so far as is reasonably practicable every member is given an opportunity to vote and unless they contain other stringent conditions designed to ensure a fair and secret ballot.

65. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he is satisfied with the powers of the certification officer in relation to the conduct of trade union ballots.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am satisfied with the powers of the certification officer in relation to the conduct of trade union ballots, as extended by the Trade Union Act 1984.

He is now empowered to make inquiries into complaints by individual trade union members of non-compliance with the Act's requirements on the election of trade union leaders and, where appropriate, to make a declaration specifying the provisions which have been breached.

In addition the Act extends the authority given to the certification officer by the Trade Union Act 1913 for approving the rules of political fund ballots. His approval may only be given where trade unions arrange for such ballots to meet new standards of secrecy and fairness.

73. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation to ensure that trades union ballots are independently organised and counted.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have no immediate plans to introduce further legislation on the conduct of trade union ballots.

The Employment Acts 1980 and 1982 and the Trade Union Act 1984 have taken significant steps to encourage the use of the ballot box as a means of reaching trade union decisions. These should lead to an increase in the number of ballots taking place and an improvement in the overall level of trade union democracy.

The legislation lays down stringent standards as to the conduct of ballots covering secrecy, freedom from intimidation and malpractice.

Wages (Underpayment)

37. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government with regard to prosecuting employers when details are known of underpayment of wages council rates.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The wages inspectorate's policy, endorsed by successive Governments over many years, is to seek compliance with the wages council legislation by advice, persuasion and prosecution which is considered only where the offence is deliberate or repeated and the evidence adequate.

Labour Statistics

39. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons were employed in work or training schemes in May 1979; and what was the comparable figure in May 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: The table below gives estimates of
(a) persons in employment and
(b) persons engaged on Government employment or training schemes in Great Britain. The majority of those participating in government schemes are also included in the employed labour force statistics; column *(c)* indicates the numbers estimated to be included in both series.

Employment estimates for all industries are not available for the dates requested. The table therefore gives figures for the closest dates possible.

	(a) Employed Labour Force (seasonally adjusted)*	*(b) Persons on Government Schemes*	*(c) Persons thought to be covered in both (a) and (b)*
December 1984	23,627,000	690,000	400,000
June 1979	24,776,000	272,000	180,000

* This comprises employees in employment, the self-employed and persons in the armed services.

17-year-olds (Wages)

40. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how much greater than the current youth training scheme allowance is the wages council figure for 17-year-olds.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Each wages council fixes its own minimum rates for adults and young workers and some also set rates for more than one category of worker. Rates for 17-year-olds range from £34·11 to £66·60. The current youth training scheme allowance is £26·25 per week.

Trade Unions (Executive Members)

42. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will seek to modify those parts of the Trade Union Act 1984 which allows leading members of trade unions who are members of the union executive to avoid regular re-election merely by giving up their casting vote.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Part I of the Trade Union Act, which provides for the election of all voting members of

a union's principal executive committee by secret ballot every five years, comes into force on 1 October 1985. It would be premature to seek modifications before the provisions take effect.

Professional and Executive Recruitment

44. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs have been placed with the professional and executive register nationally and in Leicester to date; in each case how many jobs were filled; and at what cost.

Mr. Peter Morrison: During the 1984-85 financial year Professional and Executive Recruitment nationally handled 19,653 orders and placed 10,763 people in work. Overall expenditure was just below £8·3 million and was more than covered by income of a little under £8·5 million. The Leicester PER office received 668 orders and made 321 placings.

Since 1 April 1983, PER has operated on a self-financing basis and its operating costs are recovered in full from fees paid by employers for the recruitment services provided.

Young Persons

45. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how fast youth unemployment has increased since 1979 compared with adult unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: Direct comparisons of unemployment by age since 1979 are not possible.

Between April 1979 and October 1982 the number of unemployed registrants aged under 25 increased by 189 per cent., compared with 124 per cent. for those aged 25 or over. Then between October 1982 and April 1985 the increase in unemployed claimants in the two categories was 1 per cent. and 11* per cent. respectively.

* This figure is affected by the effects of the 1983 Budget which mean that certain men aged over 60 need no longer sign on at an unemployment benefit office.

Merseyside

46. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current unemployment level on Merseyside; and what has been the percentage increase since May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 9 May 1985, the number of unemployed claimants on Merseyside was 138,847. This is not fully comparable with the figure of 79,644 registered unemployed in jobcentre areas approximating to Merseyside in May 1979.

We are very concerned about the level of unemployment on Merseyside. That is why the area receives the highest levels of Government assistance. A substantial number of people in the area are benefiting from our special employment and training measures, two of which the youth training scheme and the community programme —are to be considerably expanded. We are committed to maintaining our economic policies which are directed at holding down inflation and public borrowing, while encouraging enterprise, flexibility and competitiveness in industry and the labour market. This is the only way to generate lasting jobs on Merseyside and elsewhere.

Skillcentre Network

47. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the review of the skillcentre network.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) on 4 June 1985 at columns *125-6*.

Wages Inspectorate

48. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his proposals for the future establishment of the wages inspectorate.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no proposals at present for changes in the wages inspectorate. The functions and staffing of the inspectorate will, however, be reviewed when the Government have taken decisions on the future of the wages council system.

51. **Mr. Bermingham** asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current rate of inspection of workplaces by the wages inspectors.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1984 the pay of workers was checked at 10·8 per cent. of establishments on the wages inspectorate's register.

Youth Wages

52. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how the levels of youth wages have changed compared with adult wages since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The relationship between the average weekly earnings of young people and adult employees in 1979 and 1984 is shown in the following table.

Average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees working a full week

	*Males aged under 18 as a percentage of adult males**	*Females aged under 18 as a percentage of adult females†*
April 1979	39·7	58·1
April 1984	43·9	50·3

* Aged 21 and over.
† Aged 18 and over.
Source: New Earnings Survey.

Part-time Workers

53. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many part-time workers earn less than £2·50 per hour.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Comprehensive estimates of the number of part-time employees earning less than £2·50 an hour are not available. The most recent available information relates to part-time female employees on adult rates covered by pay-as-you-earn schemes. The relative numbers of those earning less than £2·50 per hour and less than £2·60 per hour in April 1984 are shown in table 172 of "New Earnings Survey", part F. A copy is in the Library.

Landor Cartons (Dismissals)

56. **Mr. Terry Davis** asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects the adjudication officer to take a decision on the entitlement to unemployment benefit of those people who were dismissed by Landor Cartons in Birmingham in January.

Mr. Alan Clark: The independent adjudicating authorities have now given decisions on the unemployment benefit entitlement of employees of Landor Cartons in Birmingham; these decisions were favourable to the employees.

Job Release Scheme

58. **Mr. Golding** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to increase the allowances for those participating in the job release scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: The rates of job release allowances are reviewed each year and any increases become effective in April. I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) on 15 March 1985 at columns *316-17*, giving details of the allowances to be paid from 8 April 1985.

Health and Safety Commission

64. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to increase the funding of the Health and Safety Commission.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The estimate for 1985-86 is £93,283,000. We have no plans to increase this.

Part-time Employment

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to encourage part-time employment.

Mr. Alan Clark: We explained our strategy for employment in the White Paper "Employment — the Challenge for the Nation" (Cmnd. 9474). I announced on 15 March, in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) at columns *316-17*, changes to help ensure that the job splitting scheme and the part-time job release scheme operate more flexibly. These experimental measures are designed to encourage changes in working patterns and to help in reducing unemployment.

Shipbuilding and Ship Repair Industry

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the shipbuilding and ship repair industry by year from 1974 onwards; what was the average wage in the industry, by year for the same period; and what was the average wage in the industry expressed as a percentage of the national average industrial earnings for the same year for the same period.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following table sets out the available information:

*Shipbuilding and ship-repairing**

	Number of employees in March	*Average gross weekly earnings of adult manual men in April†*	*Col. (2) as a percentage of corresponding average earnings in index of production industries†*
	(thousands)	*(£)*	
	(1)	(2)	
1974	—	47·5	105
1975	—	64·7	113
1976	—	76·0	113
1977	—	78·3	106
1978	—	91·8	109
1979	141·1	106·4	109
1980	128·6	123·8	107
1981	122·4	135·3	107
1982	120·6	160·1	112
1983	114·7	154·2	101
1984	102·6	175·2	107

* Minimum list heading 370·1 of 1968 Standard Industrial Classification to 1981; group 361 of 1980 Standard Industrial Classification from 1982.

† Males aged 21 and over working a full week. The figures include bonus and overtime earnings which may fluctuate from year to year.

Government Communications Headquarters

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest representations he has had from the International Labour Organisation about the industrial position at Government communications headquarters.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The report of the committee of experts on the application of conventions and recommendations has now been published and will be considered at the meeting of the international labour conference in June in which the United Kingdom Government are participating. The committee observed that the Government had raised a number of complex legal issues. Its report did not find the Government in breach of convention 87.

Employment Rehabilitation Centres

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will consider maintaining the number of staff posts at employment rehabilitation centres to ensure that disabled people do not face any loss in choice of trades available to them.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is the function of employment rehabilitation centres not to train their clients in specific trades but to provide them with opportunities in which they can test and improve their physical and mental capacity for a return to work.

Current developments in the rehabilitiation programme, some of which involve staffing changes, are designed to make the overall service more relevant to the employment opportunities that are available and to the needs of disabled people.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Employment what measures have been taken to ensure that the facilities employment rehabilitation centres share with skillcentres will not be affected following the closure of some skillcentres.

Mr. Alan Clark: Five employment rehabilitation centres share sites with skillcentres which are due to close

by March 1986. The Manpower Services Commission is now exploring with the Property Services Agency the feasibility, in each case of maintaining an independent employment rehabilitation centre on the existing site or whether it would be necessary to relocate the centre elsewhere in the same area.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Terrace Pavilion

Mr. Proctor asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will bring before the Catering Sub-Committee of the Services Committee a proposal that the Terrace Pavilion be permanently erected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Biffen: I will ask the Catering Sub-Committee, in conjunction with the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee, to consider my hon. Friend's proposal.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Samanala Wewa Dam

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will institute an inquiry into the reasons for the delay in agreeing an aid and credit package in respect of the Samanala Wewa hydroelectric project in Sri Lanka; and if he will, in more general terms, introduce a more streamlined procedure for reaching decisions in such cases.

Mr. Raison: There has been no undue delay in the handling of this case by the Departments concerned: the complex issues involved have required careful consideration.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chilean War and Air Colleges

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements have been made for visits to the United Kingdom since 1 July 1982 by staff of the Chilean war college and Chilean air college.

Mr. Renton: A group from the Chilean Air Force staff college visited Britain in January 1985. A similar group from the War College will visit later this year. Such visits are part of the normal pattern of our relations with Chile.

Chile (Military Exports)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the export of the Centaur military vehicle to Chile.

Mr. Renton: A temporary export licence for demonstration purposes was granted for a single Centaur in January 1984. Any other application would be considered carefully, taking into account all prevailing circumstances.

United States Legislation (Extraterritoriality)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what correspondence he has had with the State Department of the United States of America since 1982, relating to the extraterritorial effect in the United Kingdom of United States laws, and if he will place that correspondence in the Library.

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. and learned Friend has addressed one message to Mr. Shultz and I have exchanged letters with Mr. Dam concerning the extraterritoriality discussions which were held with the United States at official level last year. In this context I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) on 26 July 1984 at column 794. It is not our practice to publish confidential correspondence between states.

Hong Kong

Mr. Stanbrook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is now able to make a statement on the arrangements to be made to enable expatriate members of the Overseas Civil Service in Hong Kong to retire from the service now with compensation for loss of career prospects and accrued pension following the conclusion of the agreement with the Republic of China as to the future of Hong Kong and of its public service.

Mr. Rifkind: We accept that we should aim to achieve suitable compensation arrangements for members of Her Majesty's Overseas Civil Service and for other pensionable overseas civil servants who are affected by the Sino-British Agreement on the future of Hong Kong. We will consider this matter in more detail in due course in consultation with the Hong Kong Government.

"Victims Against Terrorism" (South Africa)

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis his officials met representatives of Victims against Terrorism from South Africa; and what is his policy on further meetings with this group.

Mr. Rifkind: The group called at its initiative. Officials met it in keeping with our policy of meeting a wide range of opinion on South Africa, other than those groups advocating violence. There are no plans for further meetings.

United States Goods (Economic Boycott)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what report he has received from Her Majesty's ambassador in Tunis about the speech delivered in Tunis on 14 May by Yasser Arafat to the General Federation of Palestinian Writers and Journalists concerning an economic boycott of United States goods.

Mr. Rifkind: We have noted reports of a speech delivered by Mr. Yasser Arafat in Tunis on 14 May covering a wide range of issues. The text we have seen did not make reference to an economic boycott of United States goods.

Non-proliferation Treaty (Libya)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received any

evidence that Libya has breached the non-proliferation treaty by exporting weapon-grade uranium to a non-signatory nation.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Chile

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the matters discussed at a meeting between officials of his Department and Mrs. Maria Malvenda of Chile; and what statements officials made on *(a)* the human rights situation in Chile and *(b)* the future policy of the United Kingdom towards Chile in the light of this situation.

Mr. Renton: Mrs. Maluenda called on a senior Foreign and Commonwealth Office official on 2 May to explain the circumstances of her son's death. The official expressed his personal sympathy at her loss and made clear our concern about the human rights situation in Chile.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he makes of the current implications for United Kingdom operations in the south Atlantic, and concerning the Falklands in particular, of the effect of the treaty between Chile and Argentina over the ownership of islands in the Beagle straits; and what effect the ratification of this treaty in April is assessed to have on the future policy options of Her Majesty's Government regarding human rights in Chile.

Mr. Renton: We welcome any measure contributing to the stability of the region, but the question of the Beagle Channel, and our commitment to defend the Falkland Islands, are entirely separate matters. We shall continue to stand by that commitment, using the minimum forces necessary. Our policy on human rights violations in Chile remains as stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 3 June at column *75*.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards instituting a complete embargo on arms sales to Chile; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: As I told the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 9 May at column *493*, we do not believe an arms embargo would be effective. We shall, however, continue to refuse approval for the export of items which, in our judgment, are likely to be used for internal repression.

ENERGY

Coal Mining (Subsidence)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is satisfied with the operation of the provisions of the Coal Industry Act 1975 relating to coal mining subsidence compensation claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The relevant provisions of the Act are operating satisfactorily.

ENVIRONMENT

Docklands (Job Creation)

80. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of new jobs that have been created within the area of the London Docklands Development Corporation since its creation.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the written answer I gave him on 28 November 1984, at column 515, which contains the latest available figures.

The LDDC is, however, currently analysing the results of an employment survey commissioned earlier this year. It expects to have more up-to-date information in a few weeks' time and I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as this becomes available.

Rates (Unemployment)

81. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the effect of rates on unemployment.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received a number of representations about the effect of business rates on jobs and on the location of employment opportunities.

Cumbria (Rights of Way)

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decision on the draft review of public rights of way in Cumbria; and if he will explain the reason for the delay.

Mr. Waldegrave: The issue of the remaining 11 decision letters in respect of the draft review has been delayed because of the large number of objections and the complex issues they raised. However, the first of these decision letters is about to be issued; the rest will follow shortly.

Springfields Nuclear Fuel Factory (Leakage)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how and where material containing uranium hexafluoride leaked from the Springfields nuclear fuel factory has been made safe;

(2) if he will make a statement of the circumstances surrounding the discharge on 23 April of uranium hexafluoride from the Springfields nuclear fuel factory into open waterway at Salwick hall farm, Lancashire.

Mr. Waldegrave: No uranium hexafluoride was discharged from the Springfields nuclear fuel factory on 23 April. A quantity of uranium-bearing wash water was spilt which contaminated silt in a nearby stream. The stream bed was dredged as a precautionary measure and the contaminated material was removed to the Springfields site for disposal. Action has been taken to prevent a recurrence of the incident.

Consultative Council on Local Government Finance

Dr. John Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been made to him of the present operation of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: My Department has received three written representations about the operation of the

Consultative Council on Local Government Finance; from the London Boroughs Association, the Greater London council and the Association of London Authorities. There was also discussion with all of the local authority associations at the CCLGF meeting held on 17 April. The associations requested that there should be no change to the existing structure of local authority representation for a year. The associations seemed generally content with the other aspects of CCLGF arrangements.

Norman Shaw South (Contaminated Water)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the contamination of water in the Norman Shaw South offices; when the contamination was first discovered; and what action is to be taken to remedy the contamination.

Sir George Young: I would refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made to the House on 6 June, at column 453.

An investigation is under way and I shall publish the report as soon as it is available.

Building Regulations

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department first consulted interested parties about the content of the revised building regulations.

Sir George Young: Following a White Paper in February 1981 on the "Future of Building Control in England and Wales" (Cmnd. 8179), two consultative papers were issued on the form and content of the building regulations on 27 May 1982. The first of three consultation letters on draft regulations was issued on 30 March 1983.

Berwick Rangers Football Club

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make representations to FIFA concerning the impact of the ban on English football clubs playing matches in other countries on Berwick Rangers football club, which is a member of the Scottish League, although the club is based in England.

Mr. Macfarlane: It is for the English or Scottish football authorities to make such representations.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his estimate of savings in operating costs to be achieved by the abolition of the Greater London council includes any allowance for changes in the cost of debt servicing.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the annual operating costs and savings which he expects will recur from the proposed abolition of the Greater London council arising from cost-effective integration of transferred services;

(2) what are the annual operting costs and savings that he expects to recur from the proposed abolition of the Greater London council arising from elimination of the Greater London council/London boroughs liaison;

(3) what are the annual operating costs and savings which he expects will recur from the proposed abolition of the Greater London council arising from economies of scale;

(4) if he will provide detailed estimates of the transitional costs of abolition other than redundancy costs in *(a)* the first year, *(b)* the first five years and *(c)* the first 10 years after the proposed abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 June 1985]: I have nothing to add to the estimates in the answer my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) on 30 November 1984, at column 611.

Grant-related Expenditure Assessments

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish details of the service components of local authorities' grant-related expenditure assessments for 1985-86.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has today placed in the Library of the House copies of "The Technical Handbook of Grant Related Expenditure 1985-86", which provides this information. A copy is being sent to each local authority in England, and to each of the local authority associations.

Household Survey

Mr. Charles Wardle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached a decision on a large-scale household survey for England.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The need for a large-scale household survey is being considered in the context of our local government finance studies. We expect to announce a decision on the survey later this year.

Geese (Quarry List)

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any intention to reinstate the Curlew, Redshank, Brent and Barnacle geese to the quarry list; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I requested a report on the situation from my scientific adviser, the Nature Conservancy Council. It advises strongly against any change in the protected status of these species. I have also, of course, considered the views put forward by all other interested parties, including the case put to me by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation in respect of the curlew and redshank. However, after weighing all the evidence and views submitted I am not convinced that there is sufficient justification to reduce the current protection which these species now enjoy. Consequently, the Secretary of State does not intend to make any order to place these species on the quarry list.

TRANSPORT

Motor Insurance

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he has held any consultations with representatives of *(a)* the motor insurance industry and

(b) the Motor Insurers Bureau concerning the European Commission directive on motor insurance; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he intends to introduce legislation to compel drivers of motor vehicles to exchange insurance particulars following damage only road traffic accidents;

(3) whether he now intends to introduce legislation to require drivers of motor vehicles to have compulsory third party property damage insurance.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A consultation document on the issues raised by implementation of the directive in the United Kingdom was published by my Department in October 1984. Copies were sent to some 200 consultees, including Motor Conference, the Motor Insurers Bureau, and representatives of road users. Copies were placed in the Library. I have now considered the replies and I hope, in the light of the response, to introduce measures this Session to implement the directive. They will require motorists to be insured against their liability for damage to property belonging to third parties, and will also cover the disclosure of insurance details following damage-only accidents.

Coaches (London)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport with whom he or his officials have had meetings, in the last five years, to discuss the problems of coach parking in London; what current proposals are being considered; if he will list the alternative options available; what is his policy on the extent to which costs arising from coach parking are borne by the coach-operators themselves; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Coach parking in London is primarily the responsibility of the GLC and boroughs, with whom coach operators, the police, my Department and other bodies involved maintain continuous contact over a wide range of traffic and enforcement matters.

British Airports Authority (Privatisation)

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what powers he intends to take to prevent the holding company subsidising loss-making airports when he introduces legislation bringing the British Airports Authority into private ownership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As my right hon. Friend made clear in his statement, and in answer to questions, on 5 June, each of the British Airports Authority's airports under the legislation I propose will be established as a separate, subsidiary company. I will also take steps to ensure that any borrowings from the parent holding company to the subsidiaries are transparent, and that a commercial rate of interest is paid on them. I am considering which of the several ways of achieving these objectives would best ensure that they will continue to be met after privatisation.

SCOTLAND

Broadleaved Woodlands

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated cost per annum of fulfilling the measures proposed for broadleaved woodlands which are outlined in "Broadleaves in Britain: Review of Policy" in terms of *(a)* grant aid, *(b)* staff training and *(c)* forestry authority and advisory work.

Mr. John MacKay: The proposals outlined in the discussion paper are still being developed and have yet to be presented to the Government. It is not possible, therefore, to give an estimate of costs at this stage.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the working time of the Forestry Commission's conservancy private woodland and environment officers will be allocated for the implementation of the advisory functions on broadleaves outlined in paragraph 23 of the "Broadleaves in Britain: Review of Policy".

Mr. John MacKay: The role envisaged in this area for the commission's conservancy private woodland and environemnt officers is primarily one of co-ordinating sources of advice. It is anticipated that most of the Forestry Commission's advice to private owners on broadleaves questions will be provided by the forestry district managers and their staffs.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the broadleaved woodland plantings approved for grant aid under the forestry grant scheme since April 1983 were subject to field inspection by Forestry Commission staff before approval was given.

Mr. John MacKay: It is the Forestry Commission's practice to inspect the area concerned before approving any application for entry to the forestry grant scheme.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of grants approved and the area of woodland concerned, under *(a)* the basis III dedication scheme and *(b)* the forestry grant scheme in each year since 1981-82 for planting (i) pure broadleaved woodland and (ii) mainly broadleaved woodland with some conifer element.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is not available in the form requested, but the total area of broadleaved planting since 1981-82 under the Forestry Commission's grant schemes was as follows:

hectares

Year to 31 March	*Dedication schemes*	*Forestry grant scheme*	*Other grant-scheme*	*Total*
1982	740	27	494	1,261
1983	604	816	91	1,511
1984	505	1,173	33	1,711
*1985	488	1,142	17	1,647

*Provisional.

Rates

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his assessment of the effect of the Valuation (Deduction from Gross Annual Value) (Scotland) Order 1984 on the average level of domestic rates paid by the occupiers of houses with rateable values of £400, £500, £600, £700, £800, £900, £1,000, £1,100, £1,200, £1,300, £1,400, £1,500, £1,600, £1,700, £1,800, £1,900 and £2,000 in the coming year.

Mr. Ancram: The order prescribes revised deductions from the gross annual value of dwelling houses and other domestic property in respect of certain expenditure on repairs and maintenance. The resulting net annual value is then taken as the rateable value. Previously deductions were made as originally specified in the Rating and Valuation (Scotland) Act 1956. The following table shows for houses of given rateable value the corresponding gross annual value and what rateable value would have resulted from application of the earlier deductions.

Rateable Value 1985-86	*Equivalent Gross Annual Value*	*Rateable Value calculated on 1956 deductions*
£	£	£
400	549	454
500	659	546
600	769	637
700	879	729
800	989	821
900	1,099	913
1,000	1,208	1,003
1,100	1,325	1,101
1,200	1,446	1,202
1,300	1,556	1,302
1,400	1,687	1,403
1,500	1,807	1,502
1,600	1,928	1,603
1,700	2,048	1,703
1,800	2,169	1,804
1,900	2,289	1,904
2,000	2,410	2,005

At all levels the effect of the 1984 order is therefore to reduce the rateable value of the property concerned; the saving in rates paid by the householder will depend on the circumstances of each property.

Community Programme (Dundee)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs under the community programme have been advertised in the Dundee jobcentre since 1 October 1984; and how many of those had a waiver on them.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The number of community programme vacancies advertised in Dundee jobcentre since 1 October 1984 is 826; of these 84 had a waiver.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for Fife and each region of Scotland and Britain the number of youth training scheme places authorised for 1984-85, the numbers available and the proportion of available places of those authorised.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Awards

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimates he has made of the potential savings to the Exchequer of funding discretionary student grants by loans rather than grants.

Sir Keith Joseph: In 1983-84, the latest year for which figures are available, expenditure on discretionary awards by local education authorities was some £125 million (of which £90 million was for maintenance and £35 million for fees). The extent to which Exchequer savings would accrue from the substitution of loans for grants would depend upon the terms of any loan scheme, as well as on the arrangements for assisting local authority expenditure through central Government grant.

United States of America (Conference Restrictions)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many learned institutions, professional bodies, or other organisations, have made representations to him concerning restrictions placed by the United States Government on attendance at scientific and academic conferences and meetings in the United States of America, since 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: None.

Mathematics and Science

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will seek to make provision within future core curriculum proposals for quantitative standards of timetable provision for mathematics and for science subjects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Cockroft committee stated in its report that the average amount of time allocated specifically to mathematics in junior classes and the time allowance for mathematics usually found in secondary schools were adequate, although it recommended that consideration should be given to the way in which this time was distributed within the timetable.

The average figure for science activities by the end of the primary phase is about 5 per cent. of lesson time. The Department's recent statement of policy on science five-16 suggests that a broad science curriculum for all pupils should occupy about 10 per cent. of total curriculum time in the first two secondary years, rising to a maximum of 20 per cent. in years four and five.

The effectiveness with which the limited total teaching time is used in schools is of course central to the Government's policies for improving standards.

National School System

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what alterations he plans to the national school system to seek to improve the productive quality of the labour force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Improving the effectiveness of schools' contribution to preparation for working life is an important aspect of the Government's policies for raising standards. These are set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469).

Pre-vocational Instruction

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to include pre-vocational instruction in school curricula.

Mr. Dunn: The White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) sets out the Government's view of the contribution that pre-vocational courses can make within the school curriculum. The technical and vocational education

initiative is promoting a variety of pre-vocational programmes which for 14 to 16-year-olds form part of broad and balanced school curriculum. The Government have set up a working party, under the chairmanship of Mr. R. S. Johnson and serviced by the Secondary Examinations Council, to draft national criteria for pre-vocational and vocationally oriented examinations taken by pupils of statutory school age.

Studies (Co-ordination)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what co-ordination there is of studies between successive classes and successive schools.

Mr. Dunn: Arrangements to ensure proper continuity and progression throughout the compulsory period of education should form an important part of LEAs' and schools' policies for the curriculum. One aspect of the Government's policy for improving standards in schools is to encourage the further development of such arrangements.

School Curriculum

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance is given on the school curriculum as a whole for different ability strata.

Mr. Dunn: The White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) sets out the Government's proposals for reaching broad national agreement about the objectives of the curriculum for all pupils, including a more precise definition than exists at present of the desired levels of attainment for pupils of differing abilities at the ages of 11 and 16. Publications such as those in Her Majesty's inspectorate's "Curriculum Matters" series have an important part to play in this process.

Education Committees

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list for each local educational authority in England the composition of the education committee indicating the number of elected members and the number of co-opted members and in each local authority whether the co-opted members have full, partial or no voting rights.

Mr. Dunn: The list is as follows. The education committees of all authorities in England except one have co-opted members; the voting and other rights of the latter are the same as those possessed by elected members.

Education Authority	*Size of Education Committee*	*Elected Members*	*Co-opted Members*
Barking	41	30	11
Barnet	35	25	10
Bexley	38-46	27-35	11
Brent	34	23	11
Bromley	35	25	10
Croydon	17	17	0
Ealing	40	28	12
Enfield	51	40	11
Haringey	24	18	6
Harrow	36	27	9
Havering	29	21	8
Hillingdon	36	23	13
Hounslow	34	28	6
Kingston-upon-Thames	28	20	8
Merton	33	25	8
Newham	35-39	24-28	11
Redbridge	36	27	9
Richmond-upon-Thames	30	21	9
Sutton	24	18	6
Waltham Forest	28	22	6
ILEA	65	48	17
Birmingham	43	29	14
Coventry	38-44	24-28	14-16
Dudley	28	20	8
Sandwell	32	24	8
Solihull	28-32	22	6-10
Walsall	30	20	10
Wolverhampton	30	19	11
Knowsley	34	23	11
Liverpool	39	27	12
St. Helens	27-32	20-25	7
Sefton	32	25	7
Wirral	32	24	8
Bolton	35	24	11
Bury	24-29	15-20	9
Manchester	40-48	29-34	11-14
Oldham	24	18	6
Rochdale	30-34	21	9-13
Salford	25	17	8
Stockport	34	22	12
Tameside	40	29	11
Trafford	24	18	6
Wigan	37	25	12
Barnsley	37	27	10
Doncaster	36	26	10
Rotherham	39-41	26-28	13
Sheffield	53	35	18
Bradford	40	27	13
Calderdale	28	21	7
Kirklees	34	26	8
Leeds	24-48	16-36	8-12
Wakefield	46	34	12
Gateshead	28	22	6
Newcastle upon Tyne	26	20	6
North Tyneside	30	24	6
South Tyneside	43	32	11
Sunderland	41	29	12
Isles of Scilly	18-22	13	5-9
Avon	38	30	8
Bedfordshire	36	26	10
Berkshire	48	29	19
Buckinghamshire	44	34	10
Cambridgeshire	47	34	13
Cheshire	44	32	12
Cleveland	47	36	11
Cornwall	48	36	12
Cumbria	49	36	13
Derbyshire	55	39	16
Devon	37-49	28-34	9-15
Dorset	57	40	17
Durham	47-55	36-40	11-15
East Sussex	41	30	11
Essex	60	43	17
Gloucestershire	47	32	15
Hampshire	48-52	32-36	16
Hereford and Worcester	35	27	8
Hertfordshire	51	34	17
Humberside	46-48	32-34	14
Isle of Wight	28	20	8
Kent	64	48	16
Lancashire	61	46	15
Leicestershire	50	38	12
Lincolnshire	43-45	32	11-13
Norfolk	41	31	10
North Yorkshire	44	32	12
Northamptonshire	43-45	30-32	13
Northumberland	40	28	12

Education Authority	Size of Education Committee	Elected Members	Co-opted Members
Nottinghamshire	57	45	12
Oxfordshire	36	26	10
Salop	39	30	9
Somerset	32	24	8
Staffordshire	57-67	42-52	15
Suffolk	44	35	9
Surrey	43	32	11
Warwickshire	52	39	13
West Sussex	40	30	10
Wiltshire	50	37	13

School Meals

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many school meals were served in each year since 1979; how many such meals were provided free; and what are his estimates of the likely totals in the current year and 1986-87 if the proposals in the social security review are implemented.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested on school meals provision in England in past years is available in the Library, where it can be obtained from the published reports on the annual school meals census. The social security review proposals are not planned to take effect before 1987. They would therefore have no effect on 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the average price, highest price and lowest price, respectively, charged by any education authority for a school meal in 1979-80 and each subsequent year.

Mr. Dunn: Prices of fixed meals in primary, secondary and special schools in each authority are shown in the Department's annual published school meals census, which is available in the Library. Cash cafeteria meal costs depend on individual choices of meal components, and since these are variable, they are not reflected in the figures and average prices are not calculated for each authority.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the number of children who will be entitled to receive free school meals if the proposals in the social security review are implemented.

Mr. Dunn: In October 1984 the number of pupils in England who qualified for free school meals because their parents were in receipt of supplementary benefit is estimated to have been approximately 680,000. If the proposals in the Social Security Green Paper are implemented, the number of pupils entitled to a free school meal will vary according to the number with parents entitled to the proposed income support, which will replace supplementary benefit.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what categories of children will still be entitled to a free school meal if the proposals in the social security review are implemented; and what categories currently so entitled will not.

Mr. Dunn: If the proposals in the Social Security Green Paper are implemented, pupils whose parents are in receipt of income support, the successor to supplementary benefit, would continue to be entitled to free school meals. The rates of the proposed family credit, which is to replace family income supplement, will be enhanced to provide extra cash help instead of free school meals.

A third category of pupils for whom the whole or part of the charge may be remitted at local authority discretion would lose that benefit.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sugar Beet (Rhizomania)

Mr. Forth asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has made any proposals to prevent the entry to the United Kingdom of sugar beet affected by rhizomania.

Mrs. Fenner: An order was introduced last year to control imports into the United Kingdom of sugar beet plants and unprocessed seed. A further order has now been laid before Parliament extending controls to other seed and plants of Beta vulgaris.

The United Kingdom has also pressed in Brussels for Community measures to contain the disease and the Commission has recently circulated to the EC plant health standing committee draft proposals for Community measures to control imports and exports of Beta vulgaris and any other material intended for planting on agricultural land.

Mr. Forth asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the incidence of rhizomania affecting sugar beet in continental Europe; and what measures are being taken by the European Economic Community Commission to control and eradicate this disease.

Mrs. Fenner: Rhizomania occurs widely in sugar beet areas of Italy, Greece and the southern half of the Federal Republic of Germany. There are also affected areas in France, Austria and Yugoslavia. It is present in most East European countries. It has recently been reported in the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland. Eradication is not a feasible proposition in a country where it is firmly established. However, the United Kingdom has been pressing in Brussels for Community measurs to contain the disease through controls on imports and exports of Beta vulgaris and other material for planting on agricultural land. The Commission has recently circulated to the EC plant health standing committee draft proposals for Community measures which would have this effect.

Land Drainage Committees

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for each regional and local land drainage committee in England and Wales the present members, the names of those bodies who appointed them and whom they represent, and their occupation or profession.

Mrs. Fenner: I am unable to reply at present. Most of the information on appointments to regional and local land drainage committees is held by the 10 water authorities in England and Wales. I shall ask them for the details requested and write to my hon. Friend in due course.

Poultrymeat Imports

Mr. Speller asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what volume of poultrymeat has been

recorded by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise at the port of Plymouth as having been imported from France in each month since January 1984.

Mr. MacGregor: Information available on poultrymeat imported through Plymouth does not separately identify country of origin.

Total imports of fresh/frozen poultrymeat (excluding offals) through Plymouth for the period requested were as follows:—

	Tonnes	
	1984	*1985*
January	343	701
February	464	786
March	457	606
April	432	*
May	385	*
June	555	*
July	593	*
August	363	*
September	677	*
October	892	*
November	1,058	*
December	638	*

* Data not available

Milk Quotas

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from, and what discussions he is undertaking with, farming organisations on a central planning authority to control and regulate dairy quota allocations and transfers.

Mr. MacGregor: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to the arrangements which might apply if we are successful in Brussels in negotiating a system of leasing and/or sales of quota. Discussions are taking place with the Commission, the MMBs and the farming organisations as to how such schemes might operate. One opinion is that the MMBs might act as a central clearing house for offers and bids for quota but we are still at the formulative stage.

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many dairy quota hard cases he has had passed to him by hon. Members for review;

(2) what conclusions he has reached following his study of dairy quota hard cases; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the number of dairy quota hard cases he has reviewed which fall into the following categories *(a)* cases of farmers not appealing to the tribunals on time, *(b)* cases of farmers who felt that the tribunals did not give them a fair hearing, *(c)* cases of farmers who have changed farms and their quota has been assessed on their former farm of lower output, *(d)* cases of farmers who have changed farms and received no quotas at all, *(e)* cases of farmers who were due to come into milk production in 1985-86 and now have no quota at all, and *(f)* cases of farmers who held back on production because of uncertainty and were cut back from the actual base on 2 April rather than their planned farm and horticultural development scheme base.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received a considerable number of representations from hon. Members and others about individuals who have received no milk quota or a quota which is considered insufficient. In most cases the information provided is insufficiently detailed to enable them to be classified as requested by the hon. Member.

The amount of quota available for re-allocation is very small. I am considering, in consultation with the industry organisations, how best to distribute it. I expect to make an announcement soon.

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if it is still his view that dairy quotas should last only five years; and in what circumstances he would envisage asking for them to be maintained on a permanent basis.

Mr. MacGregor: There are no plans being envisaged within the Community for continuation of the dairy quota system after the five years originally proposed for it.

Support Costs

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost to the Exchequer of support to United Kingdom agriculture, as follows *(a)* gross cost and *(b)* cost net of all refunds; and if he will show *(b)* as a percentage of gross domestic product, for the years 1960-61, 1970-71, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, on 21 May 1985, c. *374*]: Public expenditure under the CAP and on national grants and subsidies for the years 1980-81 to 1984-85 is given in table 28 of the annual review White Paper and similar data for earlier years is given in previous White Papers. These tables also show, where applicable receipts from the Community budget. Data of the gross domestic product for the years up to 1983-86 are contained in the *Economic Trends* annual supplement. The figure for 1984-85 is given in table 2.4 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1985-86.

As we contribute to, as well as draw from, the Community budget, these figures can be more meaningfully compared with gross than with net agricultural expenditure.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information has been received from the West German Government regarding the prohibition of Paraquat in that country; and what steps are being taken to perpetuate the long-term experiment involving Paraquat application to soils at the Yarnton weed research laboratory.

Mrs. Fenner: [*pursuant to her reply*, 3 June 1985 c. *89*]: Information received from the West German Government indicates that the non-renewal of approvals for certain products containing Paraquat in the Federal Republic is linked to uncertainties about the long-term effect of continued application of the active ingredient on a limited range of soil types, where minimum calculation techniques are employed, and where particularly sensitive crops are to follow treatment. I understand an appeal has been lodged against the decision.

The long-term experiment at the weed research organisation has revealed useful information but has now largely run its course. No arrangements are therefore to be made to continue the study after the spring of 1986.

DEFENCE

ARWEN 37

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the armed forces have any plans for the development or introduction of a fully automatic version of the ARWEN 37 weapon.

Mr. Lee: No.

Woolwich Arsenal (Bird Poison)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the estimated cost of using rodent control operators to put down bird poison at Woolwich arsenal over the weekend of 1-2 June 1985;

(2) why his Department has used slow-acting poison against wild birds at Woolwich arsenal; and what representations have been made on this matter from staff or outside bodies;

(3) how many times in recent years bird poison has been used at Woolwich arsenal; and what is the estimated number of *(a)* pigeons and *(b)* other wild birds which have been killed as a result.

Mr. Lee: The culling of feral pigeons is licensed annually by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and is carried out from time to time at Woolwich arsenal by an MOD employee who has been specially trained. The task is carried out in accordance with procedures laid down by the licensing Ministry. Other wild birds are revived and set free. Culling is necessary because of the health hazards posed by droppings and the decomposing bodies of pigeons which die after becoming trapped in buildings, particularly in roof spaces. There have been four culls since the first licence was granted in 1983 on 15 October 1983, 12 May 1984, 3 August 1984 and 24 November 1984; 195 pigeons were killed. No other wild birds have been killed. The problem persists and more frequent culling will be needed in the future. About 15 man hours are expended on each occasion, largely at weekend rates and materials cost about £6. No culling took place at the weekend 1-2 June 1985. No representations on the matter have been made by staff, although a recent inquiry from a local RSPCA Inspector on the method of culling was received on 3 June. A reply is being sent.

Chile

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the occasions since 1 July 1982 when Her Majesty's ships have made visits to ports in Chile.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all visits made by United Kingdom warships to Chilean ports in the last 12 months, with the reasons in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Her Majesty's ships have made the following visits to Chilean ports since 1 July 1982:

Ship	*Date*
HMS Hecate	January 1983
HMS Falmouth	August 1983
HMS Herald	October 1983
HMS Endurance	December 1983
HMS Herald	August 1984
HMS Endurance	April 1985

All of these visits were for the purposes of rest and recreation.

Service Hospitals (Complaints Procedure)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he plans to introduce a complaints system for service hospitals similar to that proposed for National Health Service hospitals in the Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill.

Mr. Lee: Procedures already exist at the Service hospitals under which Service and Civilian patients may make complaints. We believe the procedures operate satisfactorily but will be reviewed in the light of any procedureal changes introduced into National Health Service hospitals as a consequence of the Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill.

Prime Contractors

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all those companies which have been designated prime contractors by his Department; and what is the total value of the work involved for each contractor.

Mr. Butler: The information sought could not be given without disproportionate time and effort.

Avimo Ltd.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence when Avimo Ltd. was appointed a prime contractor by his Department; for how long; and for what work.

Mr. Butler: Avimo has never been appointed as a prime contractor to the Ministry of Defence.

Euryalus and Otter (Refits)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will explain the basis on which costings will be made of the work done by the royal dockyards in the refitting of Euryalus and Otter.

Mr. Lee: Work done by the royal dockyards in support of the refits of Her Majesty's ships Euryalus and Otter and stores supplied to the refits will be charged on a full cost basis, in accordance with the usual public accounting procedures. Under these provisions the direct cost of such work, together with an appropriate share of MOD overheads, is attributed to the project in question.

RAF Aircraft (Chilean Airfields)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in each of the last 12 months Royal Air Force planes have utilised landing facilities at Chilean airfields, with the reasons in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: None.

Exercise Brave Defender

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Greenham common and Molesworth will be key points in the Brave Defender exercise.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 June 1985, c. *309*]: No.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Grants and Allowances

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of recipients in Northern Ireland and the total amount paid in *(a)* death grant, *(b)* maternity allowance and *(c)* special diet supplement and special laundry supplement for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Chris Patten: It is estimated that in the 1983-84 financial year 14,000 persons in Northern Ireland received death grants at a total cost of £400,000 and that 11,600 women in Northern Ireland received maternity allowances at a total cost of £4,400,000. Information about special dietary and laundry supplements is not held in the precise form requested. However, on 7 December 1983, the latest date for which figures are available, the estimated numbers of supplementary benefit recipients whose additional requirements included special dietary and laundry expenses and the annual amounts involved were as follows:

	Numbers	*Annual requirements £*
Special diets	21,100	2,746,000
Laundry	1,300	130,000

The amount of money actually paid to recipients in some long-term cases is reduced by up to £1 per week.

Supplementary Benefit

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of young people of 16 and 17 years of age in receipt of supplementary benefit; and what is the weekly total amount paid to this age group in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: On 7 December 1983, the latest date for which information is available, some 6,200 claimants aged 16 or 17 were receiving supplementary benefit. To total weekly amount is not readily available but the majority of existing claimants in this age group are likely to be currently receiving the ordinary non-householder rate of £17·30.

Family Income Supplement

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the amount and the number of people who are in receipt of family income supplement in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: On 3 June 1985 the number of families was 14,567. In the financial year 1984-85 just over £11 million was paid.

State Pensions

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his latest estimate for expenditure on state pensions in Northern Ireland and the likely recipients in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1996 and *(c)* 2001.

Mr. Chris Patten: The latest estimate of annual expenditure on contributory retirement pensions in Northern Ireland is £351·5 million and the estimated numbers of recipients are as follows:

	Numbers
1991	211,900
1996	211,900
2001	212,800

Bus and Rail Services

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how the present level of Government support for bus and rail services in Northern Ireland compares with the level in 1978-79.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

	1978-79 £000	*1984-85 £000*
Rail	5,250	10,774
Bus	5,069	9,939
	10,319	20,713

Nurses (Pay)

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average number of hours overtime worked per week by *(a)* a first year student nurse, *(b)* a second year student nurse, *(c)* a third year student nurse, *(d)* an enrolled nurse, *(e)* a staff nurse and *(f)* a sister grade II in Northern Ireland in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

Average number of hours overtime worked per person per week

Grade	*Hours*
1st year student nurse	0·01
2nd year student nurse	0·07
3rd year student nurse	Nil
Enrolled nurse	0·43
Staff nurse	0·15
Sister Grade 2	0·18

Gas Industry

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the total number of jobs that will be lost if the Northern Ireland gas industry closes down.

Dr. Boyson: Approximately 1,000 jobs over the closure period, but this would be offset by higher employment in other fuels, particularly coal and liquid petroleum gas, which are heavily labour-intensive in distribution.

Cold Storage

Mr. Nicholson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the cold storage and blast freezing capacity available in Northern Ireland at the current time;

(2) what is the amount of expansion in the facilities available for cold storage and blast freezing in Northern Ireland since October 1984; and if he will list them;

(3) what proposals there are to provide further cold storage and blast freezing facilities in Northern Ireland in the next six months; and if he will list them.

Dr. Boyson: Information on overall storage and freezing capacity is not available. The Northern Ireland

Departments of Agriculture and of Economic Development are at present studying the problems of storage for beef with a view to meeting the requirements of the peak period of intervention buying in the autum, and statistical information on capacity will be available shortly.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Unemployment Benefit

77. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate what numbers of unemployed people receive no unemployment benefit.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to the *Quarterly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants*, a copy of which is in the Library.

Dentures

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many dentures constructed of chrome cobalt were supplied by dental surgeons under the National Health Service in the two years preceding and the two years following the removal of such dentures from the list of items requiring prior approval from the Dental Estimates Board before the work in question could proceed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The prior approval requirements for metal-based dentures were altered on 1 October 1980 and brought into line with the requirements for acrylic-based dentures. The number of metal based dentures supplied in England and Wales in the two preceding and two following years is as follows:

Year ended 30 September	*Number*
1979	60,810
1980	80,260
1981	108,670
1982	142,180

We cannot identify separately the number of chrome cobalt dentures.

Rubella

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he has taken to increase the rate of immunisation among schoolgirls and women of child-bearing age against rubella.

Mr. John Patten: On 29 June 1983 my right hon. and learned Friend announced in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) at column *99* a major co-operative publicity campaign between voluntary organisations, the Health Education Council and the Government. This three-year campaign, co-ordinated by the National Rubella Council under the patronage of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, was launched in November 1983. The campaign is a sustained effort to increase immunity to rubella in these groups.

Board and Lodging Payments

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the implications of the new regulations on board and lodging accommodation payments for the rights of supplementary benefit claimants living temporarily in such accommodation to register with general practitioners; and whether he has considered issuing instructions on this point to family practitioners' committees.

Mr. Whitney: No instructions are needed. The new regulations do not affect the existing arrangements under which a person temporarily resident in an area, who requires treatment, may call upon a doctor for emergency services or acceptance as a temporary resident and is entitled to be given any immediately necessary treatment.

Pregnancy (NHS Testing and Counselling)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he has any proposals for the National Health Service to provide free pregnancy testing and an information and counselling service for all ways of contending with the difficulties of an unplanned pregnancy; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he takes to seek to ensure that the result of a National Health Service pregnancy test is made available to the client as soon as possible and where necessary counselling is provided.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Where health authorities offer general practitioners direct access to pathology facilities, then the opportunity exists for the provision of pregnancy testing, free of charge, if the practitioner feels this is appropriate. Health authorities may also offer free pregnancy tests to the patients of family planning clinics, and are aware of the importance of facilities being readily available to give prompt confirmation of pregnancy, and an early uptake of care. This was recommended by the first report of the maternity services advisory committee, which also stressed the need for each woman to be able to discuss thoroughly, with those who will be responsible for her care, any medical and social factors which may affect the course of the pregnancy, and agree a suitable pattern of care. We have commended this report to health authorities for their consideration as to the action which could and should be taken locally to improve services.

Abortions

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the numbers and trend of young girls having abortions; whether he has received any recent expert recommendations on the matter; whether he has any proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I gave detailed statistics on the number and rate of abortions carried out on girls aged under 16 resident in England and Wales from 1968 to 1983 respectively in my replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 28 January at column *61* and the hon. Member for Barking on 12 February at columns *155-58*. Statistics for the whole of 1984 are not yet available, but in the first three quarters 3,057 abortions were carried out on girls aged under 16 resident in England and Wales compared with 3,011 in the corresponding period of the previous year.

A research report published by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists on late abortions in England and Wales made recommendations about

counselling and health education for young people and the importance of the early recognition of pregnancy. A similar recommendation was made in the research report on counselling services recently published by the Policy Studies Institute. We are discussing these with the Department of Education and Science and the Health Education Council.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he has any proposals to seek to ensure that the availability of National Health Service abortion services are more evenly distributed throughout the country; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he takes to ensure that all health authorities provide sufficient National Health Service abortion facilities, including day care abortion centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is for health authorities to decide the level and scope of their provision for abortion, including day care facilities, in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will issue guidelines to all health authorities to seek to ensure that all abortions, as provided for by the Abortion Act 1967, are quickly arranged after the appropriate counselling; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is his policy towards securing the performance of therapeutic abortions as early in pregnancy as possible; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is his policy towards the provision of a facility for general practitioners and family planning clinic doctors to make appointments for abortion consultation by telephone after the appropriate counselling and discussion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is clearly desirable that abortions should be carried out as early in pregnancy as possible. Recently published research by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Royal College of General Practitioners has drawn attention to the factors which cause delay in abortion operations. We are discussing with the National Health Service how these problems, including the points made in the hon. Member's questions, can be tackled.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the level of remuneration in each health authority for speech therapists supervising students on clinical placement for each of the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not hold centrally information in the form requested.

Breast Cancer

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the incidence and trend of breast cancer in women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Breast cancer is an important cause of death in women. There were 13,277 deaths (458·02 per million female population) from breast cancer in England and Wales in 1984, and 21,165 (830·84 per million female population) registrations reported to cancer registries in 1981. These are the latest years for which figures are available. There has been a small increase in breast cancer deaths and registrations over the last 10 years.

We are already funding a large scale programme of research into the early detection of breast cancer. A recent study in Sweden has now suggested that a significant number of deaths might be avoided by the use of mammographic screening. We are establishing as quickly as possible an expert group to consider what our future policy on this subject should be in the light of the latest research findings.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the amount of grant provided by Her Majesty's Government to the Mastectomy Association and any other organisation concerned with coping with the effects of breast cancer in women for each of the past five years.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In addition to that made to the Mastectomy Association, we also make grants under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, to the women's national cancer control campaign, who are concerned with the prevention and early detection of breast cancer, and to Cancer Link who, among other activities, organise self-help groups and counselling for women with breast cancer. Details of the grants made for each of the past five years are as follows:

	1981-82 £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £
Mastectomy Association	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
Women's National Cancer Control Campaign	60,000	65,000	68,000	68,000	68,000
Cancer Link	—	—	—	6,000	6,000

We also make a substantial grant to the Health Education Council which among other activities produces and distributes a leaflet on breast self-examination.

Diabetics

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what arrangements he has to estimate the number of diabetics in the United Kingdom, and, in particular, amongst ethnic minority communities; and whether he proposes any changes in these arrangements;

(2) if he will estimate the number of diabetics in the United Kingdom *(a)* generally and *(b)* amongst ethnic minority communities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Studies have estimated that the prevalence of diabetes is between 1 and 2 per cent. of the population, between 500,000 and 1 million people in the

United Kingdom. An exercise to provide more precise estimates would be expensive and unlikely to be of significant practical benefit. We do not think special studies on the prevalence of diabetes among ethnic minorities are needed.

Occupational Therapists

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many vacancies currently exist for occupational therapists; and how this compares with the figure for 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not hold this information centrally

Infertility and Abortion (Clinics)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards the provision of separate wards and clinics for women with infertility problems from those women attending for termination of pregnancy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is widely recognised as good practice that women attending hospital for an abortion should be treated separately from those receiving infertility treatment.

Social Security Review

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he made in preparing the Green Paper on Social Security of the cost of the state earnings related pension scheme in 2034 as a percentage of gross domestic product on the assumption that the future rate of growth would be the average of *(a)* the years 1953 to 1973 and *(b)* the years 1979 to 1984, respectively.

Mr. Newton: No forecasts were made of the cost of the state earnings-related pension scheme using assumptions given in the question.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consultations with employers operating occupational pensions schemes he had *(a)* before and *(b)* since the publication of his social security reviews; and what was the nature of their advice.

Mr. Newton: A large number of employers and organisations representing them gave evidence to the inquiry into provision for retirement. The evidence contained a wide range of views on pensions issues. Organisations representing employers have also been asked to comment on proposals on pensions in the Green Paper on the "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9517).

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish, in accordance with the Croham directive, all background papers prepared for his recent study on the reform of social security.

Mr. Newton: Volume 3 of the Green Paper, "Reform of Social Security", (Cmnd. 9519) contains a number of background papers to the review. A very large amount of material was submitted in evidence to the review. Those who gave evidence are free to publish it and many have done so.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the eligibility requirements for gaining exemption from prescription charges; and which disabilities satisfy the requirements.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Exemption from prescription charges is available to people in the following categories. The list includes those medical conditions which confer entitlement to exemption.

1. Children under 16.
2. Men aged 65 or over and women aged 60 or over.
3. Pregnant women or women who have had a baby within the preceding 12 months.
4. People who get Supplementary Benefit, Family Income Supplement or Housing Benefit Supplement, their partners and dependants.
5. War or service pensioners (for items for their accepted disablement only).
6. People who qualify on low income grounds, their partners and dependants.
7. People who have—
   (i) a permanent fistula (including caecostomy, colostomy, laryngostomy or ileostomy) requiring continuous surgical dressing or an applicance;
   (ii) one of the following disorders for which specific substitution therapy is essential:
   Addison's disease and other forms of hypoadrenalism,
   diabetes insipidus and other forms of hypopituitarism,
   diabetes mellitus,
   hypoparathyroidism,
   myasthenia gravis,
   myxoedema;
   (iii) epilepsy requiring continuous anti-convulsive therapy;
   (iv) a continuing physical disability which prevents the patient from leaving his residence without the help of another person.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many persons are awaiting admission to Barnsley district general hospital for hernia operations; and what is the average waiting time;

(2) if he will give the figures of the numbers of persons and the average waiting time of each operable illness and injury for the Barnsley district general hospital.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available centrally. The right hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Barnsley health authority who may be able to provide the information requested.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons are awaiting X-ray examinations; and what is the average waiting time.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Complaints Procedures

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to establish complaints procedures for community health services as well as for hospitals.

Mr. John Patten: The Department's guidance on complaints procedures already covers the handling of complaints about the community health services. There are, however, no centrally promulgated procedures for handling complaints relating to the exercise of clinical judgment by medical and dental staff working within the

community health services. We are considering the possibility of promulgating such procedures, with the interested professional organisations.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to enable community health councils to monitor complaints received by family practitioner committees and for the provision to the public of information about family practitioner service complaints.

Mr. John Patten: Under arrangements introduced this year family practioner committees are required to compile annual programmes which include information concerning the incidence, pursuit and resolution of complaints. Previous conventions on confidentiality will be retained. The information collected will be made available to community health councils. In addition, community health council representatives are entitled to attend meetings of family practitioner committees. We expect family practitioner committees to publish extracts from their annual programmes locally including those relating to the incidence and outcome of complaints.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to establish complaints procedures covering hospitals with an agency arrangement with the National Health Service.

Mr. John Patten: The Department's guidance on complaints procedures in the hospital and community health services already covers the handling of complaints from National Health Service patients being cared for in registered homes under contractual arrangements.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to establish guidelines for the monitoring of complaints by health authorities and community health councils and for the publication of information about hospital complaints.

Mr. John Patten: The Department's guidance on the handling of complaints in the hospital and community health services requires health authorities to have systematic and effective methods of reviewing complaints and to publicise their complaints procedures. The Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill currently before Parliament would lay a duty on my right hon. Friend to direct health authorities to establish and publicise specified procedures. We shall be reviewing the existing procedures in the context of this, in consultation with all interested organisations.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to issue guidance requiring health authorities to deal thoroughly and expeditiously with complaints when either another complaint from the same person or about the same person is the subject of litigation, or a part of the complaint is the subject of litigation.

Mr. John Patten: We have advised health authorities that all complaints should be investigated thoroughly and fairly and as quickly as circumstances permit. We have also advised that legal proceedings or the likelihood of such proceedings should not deter authorities from undertaking any immediate investigation of a complaint that may be necessary.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what plans he has to establish a complaints procedure for hospitals directly managed by his Department;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to prevent National Health Service doctors entering into contracts which would impede investigations pursuant to the Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill.

Mr. John Patten: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

NHS (Pay Reviews)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the second report of the pay review body for the professions allied to medicine is to be published; if the Government are committed to its implementation; and if he will indicate how any award is to be financed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As the hon. Member will be aware the second report of the Review Body for the Professions Allied to Medicine was published on 6 June. On the other points I refer the hon. Member to the reply of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) on 6 June at column *194-6*.

Mr. W. H. Rose (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to reply to the letter to him dated 24 January, with regard to Mr. W. H. Rose of 12 Rusholme Grove, Manchester, from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have written to the right hon. Member today.

Childbirth (Statistics)

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the rates of use of general anaesthetic in childbirth in each of the different health regions.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 May 1985, c. *165*]: The available information is given in the table. It relates to the use of general anaesthesia with instrumental deliveries (caesarean section and forceps deliveries) only.

Estimated number of instrumental deliveries with general anaesthesia as a percentage of total deliveries and of instrumental* deliveries: England*

Regional Health Authority	*Percentage of total deliveries*		*Percentage of instrumental* deliveries*	
	1982	*1983†*	*1982*	*1983†*
Northern	7·0	6·8	43·7	41·4
Yorkshire	6·7	7·4	39·2	41·6
Trent	6·4	6·1	28·0	26·4
East Anglian	7·9	7·8	34·5	37·1
North West Thames	7·8	6·5	40·9	32·4
North East Thames	8·5	8·0	43·2	41·8
South East Thames	7·8	4·1	36·1	21·3
South West Thames	8·9	7·8	38·7	37·3
Wessex	6·7	6·2	33·2	31·3
Oxford	6·3	5·6	33·3	28·9
South Western	8·9	8·1	39·5	37·8
West Midlands	8·2	7·4	44·9	44·9
Mersey	10·5	9·4	42·8	43·6
North Western	8·9	8·7	44·7	45·8

* Caesarian sections and forceps deliveries only.
† Provisional.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 12 June 1985

PRIME MINISTER

European Court of Human Rights

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister whether she will introduce legislation to restrict the powers of the European Court of Human Rights as regards United Kingdom law such that it has no status with regard to political as distinct from purely legal issues; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom has signed and ratified the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. It would not be practicable or possible, to distinguish between judgments of the European Court which the United Kingdom has, under the convention, an obligation to abide by. Amendments to the convention, including any affecting the role of the European Court, need to be agreed by the contracting parties and could not be imposed by domestic legislation.

Chinese Prime Minister (Meeting)

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent meeting with the Prime Minister of China.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 7 June 1985, c. *263*]: At my first round of talks with Premier Zhao Ziyang on 3 June we signed two bilateral agreements, on economic co-operation and on co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We discussed a range of bilateral questions, including the ratification on 27 May of the joint declaration on the future of Hong Kong, and also a number of international issues. At our second round on 6 June we discussed economic co-operation and trade. Our exchanges were valuable and wide-ranging and reflected the new climate of our relations following the agreement on Hong Kong.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Judges and Magistrates (Remarks)

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General what complaints have been received by the Lord Chancellor during each of the past 10 years alleging racially offensive remarks by judges, magistrates or members of tribunals.

The Attorney-General: The information requested cannot be provided in relation to recent years except at disproportionate cost, and with regard to earlier complaints is not available. My right hon. and noble Friend The Lord Chancellor will be writing further to the hon. and learned Member.

Housing Executive (Payments to Contractors)

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Attorney-General whether any report has been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions concerning the overpayment of a contractor by the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland.

The Attorney-General: In 1985 the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland received one report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary of a police investigation into allegations of overpayment of a contractor by the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland. He has directed that there should be no prosecution on the basis of that report.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia and Sudan (Food Aid)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has anything to add to his answer of 8 May, *Official Report*, column *426*, regarding the amount of food aid promised by the European Community and the United Kingdom to Ethiopia and Sudan for 1985 and the amount so far delivered.

Mr. Raison: The revised and updated figures are:

Tonnes of wheat or wheat equivalent

	Ethiopia	*Sudan*
1. European Community		
Commitments	271,000	123,000
Deliveries*	124,000	57,000
2. United Kingdom		
Commitments	15,000	†50,000
Deliveries	15,000	50,000

* Includes deliveries from commitments made in 1984 and 1985.
† This corrects the figure given to you on 8 May (Col. *426*) and does not indicate any further commitment.

I announced on 10 June, in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) at column *638*, that we stand ready to provide up to 10,000 tonnes more bilateral food aid when we are satisfied about the arrangements to be made for its transportation and distribution in Ethiopia.

Nicaragua

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer on 3 June, *Official Report*, column *9*, when he expects to decide on the case of a probationary clerical officer in the Overseas Development Administration, alleged to have released to the press a classified Government paper relating to Nicaragua.

Mr. Raison: As my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General informed the House on 11 June in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Carrick Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) at column 395-96, he has decided that no prosecution should be brought against Mr. Dennis. Mr. Dennis has now been dismissed from the public service.

TRANSPORT

Commercial Vehicles (Overloading)

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give, by region and for the years since 1980, the number of convictions for overloading of commercial vehicles under Regulation 150 of the Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1978 made under section 40(5) of the Road Traffic Act 1972.

Mrs. Chalker: The number of convictions for overloading by each of the Department's traffic areas are contained in the annual reports of the licensing authorities. They are:

Overloading Convictions: Licensing Authorities (October to September)

Traffic Area	*Report Year*				
	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84 1st 6 months*
North Eastern (Newcastle)	152	277	323	587	419
North Eastern (Leeds)	520	644	292	260	132
North Western	139	119	294	823	307
West Midland	799	1,048	914	821	301
Eastern (Nottingham)	330	367	410	628	262
Eastern (Cambridge)	989	889	1,109	1,065	496
South Wales	147	135	453	358	166
Western	264	257	282	362	177
South Eastern	284	201	287	423	367
Metropolitan	1,014	884	1,449	1,322	674
Scottish	113	361	282	258	222
TOTAL	4,751	5,182	6,095	7,007	3,523

M11 (Link Road Proposals)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to announce his decision on the M11 link road proposals; and in what way the decision will be announced.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport hope to issue their joint decision letter next month.

Motor Cycle Noise

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Government's response to the recent European Commission report and recommendations on the reduction of motor cycle noise.

Mrs. Chalker: Explanatory memorandum 9148/84 dated 13 November 1984 set out our comments on the proposals by the European Commission to reduce noise from new motor cycles. Recent amendments by the Commission to its original proposals do not alter the proposed maximum permitted noise levels. In our view these are too high, especially for machines of up to 125 cc.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Service (Lawyers)

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many professionally qualified lawyers are at present employed in the Civil Service in a capacity relevant to their profession; in which Departments; and on what grades or remuneration.

Mr. Hayhoe: No information is held centrally on either the professional qualification of civil servants or the exact nature of their work. There are however, certain posts in the open structure in other grades where a legal qualification is required and whose members are engaged in legal work.

The table shows the distribution of such staff by department and by grade (or equivalent). In addition, there are professionally qualified lawyers elsewhere in the Civil Service who may be engaged on legal work. This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Professionally qualified lawyers in the civil service 1985

Full-time equivalents

Department	*Grade or Equivalent**									
	Grade 1	*Grade 2*	*Grade 3*	*Grade 4*	*Grade 5*	*Grade 6*	*Senior Legal Assistant*	*Principal*	*Legal Assistant*	*All*
MAFF	—	1	2	—	7	—	18	—	2	30
Charity Commission	—	—	1	1	7	—	13	—	2	24
Crown Estate Office	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
Customs and Excise	—	1	2	—	12	—	50	—	16	81
Employment Group	—	1	—	—	4	—	19	—	2	26
Environment and Transport	—	1	1	—	8	—	23	—	4	37
Office of Fair Trading	—	—	1	—	2	—	4	—	2	9
FCO	—	3	2	—	9	—	8	—	2	24
Health and Social Security	—	1	4	—	12	—	41	—	10	68
Home Office	—	1	2	—	4	—	5	—	2	14
Registry of Friendly Societies	—	—	—	1	—	—	3	—	—	4
Inland Revenue	—	1	3	—	13	—	33	—	6	56

Department	Grade or Equivalent*									
	Grade 1	*Grade 2*	*Grade 3*	*Grade 4*	*Grade 5*	*Grade 6*	*Senior Legal Assistant*	*Principal*	*Legal Assistant*	*All*
Land Registry	—	1	—	—	14	—	48	—	23	86
Lord Chancellor's Department†	2	4	19	—	20	6	61	14	22	148
Law Officers' Department	—	1	1	—	3	—	4	—	—	9
Director of Public Prosecutions	1	1	3	—	11	—	51	—	8	75
Trade and Industry	—	1	3	—	16	—	31	—	6	57
Treasury Solicitor's Department	1	1	7	—	31	—	97	—	11	148
Welsh Office	—	—	1	—	3	—	9	—	1	14
Scottish Office	—	1	1	—	10	—	28	—	2	42
Scottish Courts Administration	—	—	—	—	3	—	9	—	—	12
Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service	—	1	2	—	24	29	94	6	56	212
Lord Advocate's Department	—	1	4	—	5	—	1	—	—	11
All	4	22	59	2	219	35	650	20	177	1,188

* Certain posts attract a higher salary than the official maximum for the grade or grade level.

† Includes the Lord Chancellor's Department (LCD), Law Commission, Public Trustee Office and parliamentary counsel. LCD provides the civil service support staff for parliamentary counsel, although the cost of parliamentary counsel themselves is financed jointly by the LCD and the Cabinet Office.

Sources:

Annual Staff in Post Return, 1 April 1985.
Senior Open Structure List, April 1985.
Mandate, 1 January 1985.
Centrally Managed Staff Records, June 1985.

Asset Sales (Fees and Commissions)

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in the *Official Report* all the fees and commissions paid to primary underwriters, sub-underwriters, financial advisers, legal advisers and stockbrokers in respect of all the sales of previously publicly-owned enterprises from 3 April 1984 to date; and if he will name each firm concerned.

Mr. Moore: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 24 May 1985, at column 562, which covers all public share sales since 3 April 1984 other than the 1985 sale of shares in British Aerospace. Details for that sale in respect of the headings specified by the hon. Member are given in the table:

	Firm
Company	British Aerospace 1985
Primary Underwriters	Kleinwort, Benson Ltd., Lazard Bros. & Co. Ltd., Hill Samuel & Co. Ltd., Morgan Grenfell & Co. Ltd., J. Henry Schroder Wagg & Co. Ltd.
Sub-Underwriters	Various*
Financial advisers	Lazard Bros. & Co. Ltd.
Legal advisers	Slaughter & May
Auditors	Peat, Marwick Mitchell
Stockbroker	Hoare, Govett Ltd., Cazenove & Co.†
Total fee/Commission (£000 including VAT)	9,982‡

*Too numerous to list.

†Allotment commissions were payable to stockbrokers and other intermediaries in respect of successful applications bearing their stamps. The estimated costs of such commissions are included in the provisional total shown and the names of the firms involved are too numerous to list.

‡Estimated. Expenditure on fees and commissions is provisional pending final settlements.

Demergers

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions demergers under the provisions of schedule 18 to the Finance Act 1980 have been *(a)* applied for and *(b)* approved by the Board of Inland Revenue.

Mr. Moore: At the beginning of June 1985, 749 applications for clearance under schedule 18 to the Finance Act 1980 had been received by the Inland Revenue, of which 117 were subsequently withdrawn on the applicants' own initiative and another 22 are still being considered. Of the 610 applications which have been settled, clearance has been given to 505 (82 per cent).

Capital and Income (Distribution)

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to the answer of 3 June, *Official Report*, column *70*, concerning the distribution of capital and income, he will publish such information as he has available in a form as near as possible to that requested.

Mr. Moore: The available information is on the distribution of capital holdings and capital transfer tax liability by range of net capital value, and of capital gains tax liability by range of chargeable gain. It is published annually in "Inland Revenue Statistics", copies of which are in the Library. These statistics are derived from assessments of capital transfer tax and capital gains tax which do not contain information about income.

Bank of England Printing Works, Loughton

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect of the introduction of the £1 coin on employment at the Bank of England printing works in Loughton; to what extent any redundancies have been voluntary; and whether there is to be any redeployment of Loughton personnel elsewhere in the bank's service.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 June 1985, c. *401*]: Some 200 staff have left the Bank of England's printing works without replacement during the last two years, in the main as a result of the decision to introduce the £1 coin and to cease issuing the £1 note. Over half of this reduction was achieved through the operation of a voluntary selective severance scheme, the remainder through natural wastage. As the staff concerned were

involved with the production of bank notes—printers, guillotine operators, examiners etc.—there was no scope for their redeployment elsewhere in the Bank of England.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Closed Circuit Television Cameras

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many closed circuit television cameras the Metropolitan police have for the surveillance of people in public places; how many of these are permanently fixed; where each one is located; how many of the overall total are located within the Lambeth police district; how many of the Lambeth cameras are permanently fixed; and where each of them is sited.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Police Vehicles (Accident Statistics)

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of accidents involving police vehicles in the Northumbrian police authority area in the last 10 years in which there has been *(a)* injury and *(b)* death, and the total number of resultant deaths.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is only available for the years from 1979 onwards. This information is set out in the table.

	Accidents involving police vehicles where injuries resulted	*Fatal accidents involving police vehicles*	*Total number of deaths resulting*
1979	45	0	0
1980	32	3	3
1981	39	0	0
1982	42	1	1
1983	20	1	2
1984	10	0	0
1985*	1	0	0

*To 1 June.

Private Acts of Parliament and Byelaws (Reviews)

Mr. Tracey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department reviews proposals for local authority private Acts of Parliament and byelaws with a view to preventing additional burdens being placed on small businesses.

Mr. Mellor: yes, if the proposals relate to matters for which my right hon. and learned Friend is responsible. Additionally, in relation to byelaws for which the Home Secretary is the confirming authority, very careful consideration is given to any representations received from the business community.

Hard Drugs

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there are any plans for negotiations to take place for a multilateral extradition treaty to cover offences related to the supply and traffic of hard drugs.

Mr. Mellor: The United Nations is currently consulting member states on the matters which might be included in a proposed new international convention on drug trafficking; extradition is among the topics under consideration.

Data Protection Act

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide his latest estimate of the total cost to *(a)* the borough councils in Greater London, and *(b)* all United Kingdom local authorities of complying with the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Waddington: The estimate given during the passage of the Data Protection Bill indicated that £9 million to £11 million might be incurred by local authorities and public bodies in implementation costs in each of the first two years, with running costs at around £13 million in the first full year of operation, reducing thereafter. Estimates of likely costs to individual local authorities are not available centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate expense.

Libyan People's Bureau

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, pursuant to the Minister of State's reply to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton, 13 May, *Official Report*, column *11*, regarding Mr. Salah Najem and the Libyan People's Bureau and the subsequent letter dated 4 June, he wishes to make any corrections to the answer of 7 May, *Official Report*, columns *329-31*, regarding persons in the bureau at the time of the murder of WPC Fletcher.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Mr. Salah Najem was in the bureau at the time of the shooting, but left it soon afterwards. He was arrested and interviewed by the police, but after being eliminated from their inquiries was released.

The question asked by my hon. Friend on 7 May related to those Libyans who were required to leave the United Kingdom between 17 and 27 April 1984. Apart from those who were deported, those required to leave were those who were in the bureau at the time of the break in diplomatic relations. Mr. Salah Najem was not in that category, and was not required to leave. I regret that the first sentence of the answer referred to was incorrect in suggesting that all those in the bureau at the time of the shooting were required to leave. The position is explained in more detail in my letter of 4 June to my hon. Friend, a copy of which is in the Library.

Immigration

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to which European Economic Community countries provide for *(a)* citizens and *(b)* settled persons to bring in (1) husbands, (2) wives, (3) fiancés and (4) fiancées as of right.

Mr. Waddington: Apart from meeting their European Community obligations I understand from the information currently available that, of the European Community countries, Denmark, France and Greece make statutory provision for the admission of husbands and wives to join spouses who are either nationals of those countries or permanent residents; in the case of Belgium, any EC national has the right, to be joined by his or her wife or husband. The other countries make varying administrative

arrangements for the admission of husbands and wives. No country appears to make specific statutory provision for the admission of fiancés and fiancées.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many hon. Members have 100 or more stops outstanding on immigration cases;

(2) what is the average length of time over which a stop operates in advance of a decision being made on a particular immigrant.

Mr. Waddington: The relevant information is not recorded centrally and cannot therefore be provided without disproportionate cost.

Tamils

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Indian authorities with regard to the settlement of Tamils wishing to leave Sri Lanka.

Mr. Waddington: None. This is primarily a matter for the Governments of India and Sri Lanka. I understand that the Indian authorities have admitted some 100,000 Tamils from Sri Lanka.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Sri Lankan authorities with regard to the safe return of Tamils who have arrived in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no such discussions, but our high commission is in close touch with the Sri Lankan Government on this matter. On 31 May President Jaywardene gave our high commissioner at Colombo a formal personal assurance that no Tamils returned to Sri Lanka would be harassed or persecuted in any way.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Tamils who have arrived in the United Kingdom since 1 May have subsequently left the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: Of those Tamils who arrived in the United Kingdom after 21 April, and who on arrival sought political asylum or temporary refuge, and were refused entry, 16 had left the united Kingdom up to and including 4 June.

Diminished Responsibility

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to change the law relating to the special verdict, disability in relation to trial and diminished responsibility recommendations, as recommended in the report of the committee on mentally abnormal offenders (Cmnd. 6244) 1974.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans for legislation on these matters.

Prison Statistics

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* murderers of police and prison officers, *(b)* sexual or sadistic murderers of children and *(c)* people who have committed murder by shooting in the furtherance of theft were in prison on the most recent convenient date.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1985, c. 96]: On 31 December 1984 there were 31 persons in prison department establishments in England and Wales who had committed murder by shooting in furtherance of theft.

SCOTLAND

Public Inquiry (Edinburgh)

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has received the report of the public local inquiry held in Edinburgh on 20 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I received the report of the local inquiry on 4 June. Having considered the report carefully, I am satisfied that the City of Edinburgh district council is in default of its statutory duties under sections 23A of the Housing (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1972 and section 108(2) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, namely, to limit the amount of contribution out of their general fund to the estimated housing revenue account for the year 1985-86 to an amount not exceeding £2·824 million and to determine such district rate as will provide sufficient moneys to meet such part of the total estimates expenses to be incurred by the authority during the year 1985-86 as falls to be met out of moneys raised by rates.

Accordingly, I have today made an order under section 211 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 requiring Edinburgh district council to remedy its default within 21 days by revising its estimated housing revenue account so as to budget for a rate fund contribution within the limit set, and also by reducing the district rate by at least 1·8p in the pound, and to take all necessary steps to give full effect to these decisions. Copies of the inquiry report and of the default order have been placed in the Library of the House.

The 1·8p in the pound reduction now required is in addition to a reduction of 5·2p in the pound which I have proposed in terms of section 5 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1966 on the grounds that Edinburgh district council's planned non-housing expenditure for 1985-86 is excessive and unreasonable.

Broadleaved Woodlands

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) on how many occasions in the year to 31 March the Forestry Commission issued felling licences which permitted felling of broadleaved woods, without there being conditions attached for the replanting solely of broadleaved trees; and what area of woodland this involved;

(2) on how many occasions in the year to 31 March officials from his Department confirmed to the Forestry Commission that a proposal to clearfell a broadleaved woodland and convert it to agricultural land would make a significant contribution to the viability and economy of the agricultural holding concerned.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Agricultural Engineering Industry

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the light of his Department's recent paper entitled "A Strategy for Agricultural Research and Development," he will make a statement indicating the amount of funds to be allocated to the agricultural engineering industry in Scotland and the source of those funds.

Mr. Younger: My Department's strategy paper has been distributed widely as a consultation document and no decisions will be taken about the allocation of public funds for research and development in agricultural engineering work, or in any other subject area, until I have had the opportunity to consider responses to the paper. A further paper will be produced later this year outlining detailed proposals.

I have no plans to allocate any funds to the agricultural engineering industry.

Veterinary and Agricultural Advisory Services

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement concerning the main aspects of the administration of the veterinary services in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: Apart from services provided by private veterinary practitioners, the veterinary services in Scotland have two elements, the veterinary investigation service and the state veterinary service. The veterinary investigation service comprises part of the advisory service provided by the Scottish agricultural colleges. Overall responsibility for the state veterinary service rests on a Great Britain basis with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, but the service also advises me on those animal health matters for which I have statutory responsibility.

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to carry out a review of *(a)* the veterinary investigation services in Scotland and *(b)* the agricultural advisory services in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: The financing and management of the advisory services (including the veterinary investigation service) provided by the three Scottish agricultural colleges are currently being reviewed in the light of the Government's decision announced in the public expenditure White Paper published in January 1985 to reduce the level of public funding of the advisory services in 1987-88, and any further review would not be appropriate at this stage.

Metallic Marker Pens

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has over the use in schools in Scotland of metallic marker pens with gold and silver lettering that contain xylene/xylol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I have no information about the extent of the use of such pens in Scottish schools.

Caravan Sites

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will use his powers under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 to ensure that electrical installations on caravan sites conform to satisfactory standards.

Mr. John MacKay: Advice on electrical installations will be included in revised model standards for caravan sites which my right hon. Friend intends, after appropriate consultation, to specify later this year under section 5(6) of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960. Such standards are not prescriptive; and it will remain the responsibility of licensing authorities, in the light of any standards specified under the Act, to decide what conditions to attach to site licences, and to ensure that these are enforced.

Legal Aid

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has sent to Brodie Whyte and Whitten, West Lothian solicitors, on the paper they sent to him on the operation of legal aid procedures.

Mr. Ancram: None. The comments submitted by Messrs. Brodie, Whyte and Whitten on our consultation paper on legal aid in Scotland, along with other such comments, will be taken into account in our review of the present arrangements.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy that the Forestry Commission should consult local authorities on all occasions when grant aid or felling licences for broadleaved woods are being considered to ensure that those woodlands are correctly identified and appropriately treated.

Mr. John MacKay: No. The extent of consultations is a matter of agreement between the Forestry Commission and the individual local authorities.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will advise the Chairman of the Forestry Commission to review the "Broadleaves in Britain Review of Policy" so that the commission will consult the Nature Conservancy Council over felling licence and grant aid applications for all ancient woodlands as recommended in paragraph 145 of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology report on Scientific Aspects of Forestry in 1980.

Mr. John MacKay: No. Arrangements for consultation were agreed between the Forestry Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council in 1974 and subsequently confirmed in 1983, under the terms of a ministerial direction issued to the Forestry Commissioners. My right hon. Friend considers these arrangements to be perfectly adequate.

In the context of its review of broadleaves policy, the Forestry Commission is discussing with the Nature Conservancy Council and the countryside commissions the publication of guidelines on the management of various categories of broadleaved woodlands, including ancient woodlands, which the Forestry Commission would take into account both in its own operations and in considering applications for grant-aid or felling permission from private woodland owners. This is in line with the recommendation at paragraph 145 of the Select Committee's report.

Students (Aberdeen)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what reply he has given to the letter from the

Aberdeen university student representative council on the subject of an additional allowance for students attending the university.

Mr. Younger: The points made by the Aberdeen University Students' Representative Council have been noted, but there is no possibility of any special arrangements being introduced for Aberdeen university students at the present time as the awards settlement for the forthcoming academic session has already been announced. The Government are about to engage in consultations on the future of the system of financial support for students in the United Kingdom and the particular circumstances of students undertaking higher education courses in Scotland will be taken into account. A reply on these lines was sent by the Scottish Education Department to the Aberdeen University Students' Representative Council on 11 June.

Cash Limits

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he plans to make any changes in the cash limits for 1985-86 which are within his responsibility.

Mr. Younger: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate the cash limit on Class XV, vote 15, Education, Arts, Libraries and Social Work, Scotland, will be increased by £1,463,000 from £146,869,000 to £148,322,000. The increase is required to reflect the enactment of the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985, establishing a board of trustees of the national museums of Scotland, who will be responsible from 1 October 1985 for the administration of the Royal Scottish Museum and the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland. Under the terms of the Act, payment to the new board will be by means of grant-in-aid from class XV, vote 15.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the revised Estimates this increase will be offset by reductions in the cash limits for class XV, vote 19 by £511,000 from £1,155,000 to £644,000 and for class XV, vote 24 by £952,000 from £102,075,000 to £101,123,000 and therefore does not involve any increase in the public expenditure planning total.

Education Expenditure

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how Scotland's spending on education, expressed as a percentage of gross domestic product, compares with Western European countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 May 1985, c. 292]: In 1983-84 expenditure on educational services in Scotland, including universities was £1,785 million, representing 8·3 per cent. of the provisional gross domestic product for Scotland. The latest available information in respect of a range of European countries is given in the table:

Expenditure on Education as percentage of gross domestic product

Country	*Per cent.*	*Year*
Austria	5·9	1982
Belgium	5·9	1981
Denmark	7·4	1981
Finland	5·5	1981
France	5·0	1981
Germany, Federal Republic	5·0	1981
Greece	2·2	1979
Ireland	7·3	1981
Italy	5·8	1981
Luxembourg	6·6	1981
Netherlands	6·8	1981
Norway	8·5	1980
Portugal	4·5	1981
Spain	2·6	1979
Sweden	8·8	1982
Switzerland	5·1	1981

EMPLOYMENT

Skillcentre, Middlesbrough

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Employment what satisfactory alternative training provisions is now available in the Middlesbrough area consequent upon the closing of the Middlesbrough skillcentre.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The skillcentre training agency will transfer all the training currently provided at Middlesbrough to Billingham skillcentre which is only 6 miles away and draws trainees from a similar catchment area.

In 1984-85 the Manpower Services Commission provided 1,896 training opportunities for adults in Cleveland. The programme is planned to expand to 2,325 opportunities in 1985-86; and to between 3,600 and 4,100 in 1986-87. There is a wide range of training providers who can deliver these opportunities.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many members of the staff presently employed at the Middlesbrough skillcentre will be retained within the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Middlesbrough skillcentre currently employs 24 permanent staff. Their future employment within the Manpower Services Commission depends on the individual effect of the various personnel measures now being taken to reduce staff numbers in the skillcentre training agency. A precise assessment of numbers being retained is not yet available.

Job Release Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on 21 May, *Official Report*, column *390*, if he will state *(a)* the conditions of entitlement to job release allowances payable for more than one year and the percentage by which the allowance for a single person was uprated in April and *(b)* the conditions of entitlement to job release allowances payable for less than one year and the percentage by which the allowance was uprated in April; and if he will make a further statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The conditions of entitlement to a job release allowance, whether for less than a year or more than a year, are that participants comply with all the rules of the scheme at the time they enter the scheme, that their employer undertakes to replace them with an unemployed

person and that for any week for which they receive the allowance they do not receive any benefit that is incompatible with the allowance nor any earnings or payments in kind in excess of £4, after deducting any necessary expenses connected with work. The taxable allowance is paid to those who at the time of entry could on the basis of their age have an entitlement to receive the allowance for over a year; the tax-free allowance to those whose entitlement to receive the allowance could, on the basis of their age, not be for more than one year.

As I announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) on 15 March 1985, at columns 316-17, all job release allowances would be increased with effect from 8 April 1985. The revised rates announced were such that, net of tax, those entitled to the taxable allowance would receive on average broadly the same amount as those entitled to the tax free allowance.

WALES

Coal Industry

Mr. Rowlands asked the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate his Department has made of *(a)* the number of jobs likely to be lost in the Welsh coalmining industry in 1985 and 1986; and *(b)* of the number of jobs likely to be created in Wales by National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The National Coal Board and the mining unions met earlier this week to discuss the general situation of the south Wales coalfield. Future manpower levels will depend on decisions yet to be taken.

In the short time since it was set up, NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. has already committed just over £0·6 million in support of local agencies in south Wales concerned with job creation and has also itself made loans totalling more than £0·3 million to specific projects offering the prospect of over 300 jobs Its activities will continue to complement the economic development function of the Welsh Development Agency.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nissan

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received any representations from the Nissan company concerning the availability and quality of British-manufactured automotive components.

Mr. Butcher: No.

As envisaged in the agreement with Nissan, my Department has maintained close contact with the Company to ensure the successful implementation of the project. Discussions have been held regularly on all aspects of the operation including the developing relationship between Nissan and the United Kingdom components industry.

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied that the Nissan company will be able to achieve the agreed 80 per cent. local content for vehicles produced at its north-east assembly plant.

Mr. Butcher: I have no reason to doubt the Company's ability or intention to attain the agreed local content levels.

A statement on the agreement with Nissan, including the local content levels to be achieved in the event of the company proceeding to full scale manufacture, was made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 1 February 1984 at column 265.

Consumer Protection

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many prohibition orders have been issued under the Consumer Protection Act 1978 since its enactment; on what dates they were issued and for what products; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many prohibition notices have been issued under the Consumer Protection Act 1978 since its enactment; on what dates they were issued and for what products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: No prohibition orders or notices have been made under the Consumer Protection Act. Eight ordes and two notices have been made under the Consumer Safety Act, and I will send the hon. Member a list.

Mr. Gregory: asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the number of products which may be used by children which contain chemicals classified as dangerous under the Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: No comprehensive survey of such products has been made but the following products intended for use by children contain or use chemicals classified as dangerous:

Model Steam engines.
Modelling glues and paints.
Mercury maze puzzles.
Chemistry sets.
Other types of marker pen.

Metallic Marker Pens

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if Her Majesty's Government will introduce regulations under the Consumer Protection Act 1978 to require that metallic marker pens that contain xylene/xylol are prominently marked "Totally Unsuitable for Children"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: I do not propose to introduce regulations as I do not believe they are necessary. Importers have agreed to add suitable warning labels voluntarily.

Mr. Gregory: asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has received in respect of hazards arising from metallic marker pens.

Mr. Fletcher: I have received nine complaints that these pens have caused adverse effects, mostly headaches. In addition I have received some 20 inquiries arising from the warning labels on some brands of metallic marker pens.

Mr. Gregory: asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what discussions have been held with importers of metallic marker pens that contain xylene/xylol over warnings that these pens can be dangerous and that the chemical is classified under the Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984; and if he will make a statement.

(2) what discussions have been held with importers in Scotland of metallic marker pens that contain xylene/xylol

over warnings that these pens can be dangerous and that the chemical is classified under the Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984; and if he will make a statement.

(3) what discussions have been held with importers in Wales of metallic marker pens that contain xylene/xylol over warnings that these pens can be dangerous and that the chemical is classified under the Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984; and if he will make a statement.

(4) what discussions have been held with importers in Northern Ireland of metallic marker pens that contain xylene/xylol over warnings that these pens can be dangerous and that the chemical is classified under the Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: I have asked seven importers, all who are based in England, to add a warning, "Ensure adequate ventilation in places of use." They have all agreed to do so.

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the volume and value of metallic marker pens imported into the United Kingdom in each year since the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act 1978; what were the originating states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fletcher: Complete figures are not available. However since 1980 four firms have imported at least 8 million pens between them, all from Japan, with a value of the order of £3 million.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he has taken to warn commercial participants in the United States strategic defence initiative programme of the legal problems which may arise from United States contracts under the United States Export Administration Act.

Mr. Channon: The United States strategic defence initiative programme and its implications are still under consideration by the Government. Prospective commercial participants are likely to be aware already of the jurisdictional claims made in US export legislation and the Government's views on such claims. As with commercial contracts in general, however, it will be a matter for the companies concerned to seek their own legal advice before deciding whether or not to enter into agreements.

United States (High Technology)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will assess the impact in the United Kingdom of the United States COCOM regulations of 29 April on purchasers of United States technology, and vendors of United States technology in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The position should not be affected. The COCOM controls are not intended to prevent the flow of technology from one member state to another.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many complaints or representations he has received relating to United States extraterritorial activity in the United Kingdom high technology industry since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Since 1983, my Department has received representations concerning some 15 cases arising from United States claims to apply their laws extraterritorially to companies in high technology industry in the UK.

Tobacco Industry (Alternative Employment)

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what policy he has followed to attract alternative employment to areas where tobacco products are manufactured, but where employment is reducing due to a sustained reduction in demand for tobacco products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Tobacco products are manufactured in many parts of the UK but a major part of the industry is in areas where unemployment is above the average. My Department provides resources on a substantial scale under various schemes of assistance in the regions. Our recent overhaul of regional policy has targeted the main areas of need more accurately in order to get the maximum benefit from these resources.

Brewing and Tobacco Industries

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what efforts he has made to prevent European competitors in the brewing and tobacco industries from taking up marginal surplus capacity in their domestic industries and dumping the resulting products on the British market in a price competitive manner.

Mr. Trippier: If the hon. Member has any evidence of unfair trade practices contrary to the rules of the European Community I will be glad to consider it in collaboration with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who has responsibility for the brewing industry. I will be glad to advise the industries on how to take the matter up with the Commission if the evidence justifies it.

IBM (Correspondence)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many copies of the letter from IBM of 22 December 1983 regarding the movement of advanced IBM machines within the United Kingdom his Department has received; and how many complaints relating to the letter, or similar letters, he has received.

Mr. Channon: Several copies of the IBM letter have been received from a number of sources but there have been no complaints of practical difficulties arising from its provisions. I am not aware of any other letter containing similar provisions.

Shipbuilding Industry

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many British warship yards he estimates the existing domestic ordering requirements alone can support; and what estimate of domestic warship-building capacity and foreseeable domestic warship-building demand is available to him.

Mr. Butcher: The number of warship yards necessary to meet domestic ordering requirements depends on various factors including present work force, availability of further labour, the availability of physical assets, the types of vessels ordered and, given the specialist capability of the yards, the distribution of orders between the yards. Therefore there can be no firm estimate of domestic warshipbuilding capacity. Domestic warshipbuilding demand depends on the Ministry of Defence's ordering programme, details of which are made available to the House from time to time.

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimates he has for the size of the British merchant shipbuilding industry over the next 15 years.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has no such estimates. The future of the merchant shipbuilding industry in Britain depends primarily on the state of the international market and the degree to which our shipbuilders are competitive within that market.

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what factors he takes into account when preparing estimates of the future size of the domestic warship building market.

Mr. Butcher: The future size of the domestic warship building market will depend on the Ministry of Defence's ordering programme and the industry's success in winning warship export orders.

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy towards attracting alternative employment to shipbuilding communities; and what specific examples of the results of that policy he can cite.

Mr. Trippier: In addition to national schemes of advice and assistance operated by the Department of Trade and Industry firms in shipbuilding areas located within the assisted areas are eligible for regional aid, and the EC has designated a number of areas affected by shipbuilding closures in which funds are available to encourage alternative employment.

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy towards financial subsidies to privatised British warship yards competing for types of work currently carried out in British merchant shipbuilding yards.

Mr. Butcher: The policy towards financial subsidies for shipbuilding will be closely linked to the new regime for the shipbuilding intervention fund which has still to be approved by the European Commission.

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has regarding, average wage rates in the shipbuilding industry for the United Kingdom and for major shipbuilding countries including Japan, South Korea, China and Brazil, respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

Information about the wage rates of workers covered by the national shipbuilding and shiprepairers agreements in Great Britain is given in "Time Rates of Wages and Hours of Work", pages 39 to 41, published by the Department of Employment, a copy of which is available in the Library. Information about the 1985 agreements has not yet been included in this publication, but the main details are given in the table.

Shipbuilding and Shiprepairers agreements 1985.

	*Agreement I** £	*Agreement II** £
(a) National Weekly Minimum Time Rates		
Fully skilled classes who have completed their apprenticeship	84·25	96·20
Semi-skilled classes	74·30	84·97
Unskilled classes	66·90	72·16
(b) Minimum Weekly Earnings Level†		
Skilled classes	125·75	
Unskilled classes	97·80	

* I—British Shipbuilders, operative from 1 April 1985.
II — Shiprepairers and Shipbuilders Independent Association, operative from domestic settlement dates on or after 1 January 1985.
† For a normal week of 39 hours.

The corresponding figures for the other countries requested are not readily available. However, some indication of the level of wages in similar types of activity can be drawn from the information covering manufacture of transport equipment, a broader category which includes shipbuilding, which is given for countries including Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong in the International Labour Office's "Year Book of Labour Statistics" (table 17B), a copy of which is also in the Library.

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for what reasons the support of the British Overseas Trade Board was withdrawn from British companies exhibiting at the 1985 autumn fair at Frankfurt; how many companies were promised support; what was the anticipated cost of the support; how such notice of withdrawal was given; and how many complaints have been received by his Department or the British Overseas Trade Board.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Eastern Imports

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if there is any evidence to indicate that imports from the near and far east to the United Kingdom are proportionately higher than in other European Community countries.

Mr. Channon: OECD trade statistics indicate that in 1983 7½ per cent. of the imports of the other European Community countries came from the near and far east, compared with 11½ per cent. for the United Kingdom.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has yet received the report of the team which has been reviewing the management and organisation of the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Channon: I have now received the review team's report. I have made arrangements for this to be published today and copies have been placed in the library of the House. The report is wide-ranging and makes a number of

recommendations on how the Department's operations could be made more businesslike and provide an improved service to exporters. I am now considering the report and will announce the Government's conclusions in due course.

Fairey Engineering Ltd.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current status of the permission given to Fairey Engineering Ltd. to tender to refurbish a research nuclear reactor near Santiago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 June 1985, c. *400*]: I understand that the refurbishment of the Lo Aguirre research reactor has been postponed indefinitely by the Chilean authorities in the light of the recent earthquake in central Chile.

ENVIRONMENT

Oldham (Infrastructure)

2. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has replied to the letter containing a resolution on the subject of spending more on the infrastructure sent to him on 25 April by the Oldham metropolitan borough council.

Mr. Gow: My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will be replying to this letter shortly.

Local Government Finance

17. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the terms of reference of the Widdicombe inquiry into local government finance include consideration of the employment by local authorities of commercial polling organisations to carry out political canvassing in their areas.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: The terms of reference of the Widdicombe inquiry include the need to clarify the limits and conditions governing discretionary spending by local authorities. I hope my hon. Friend will submit evidence of any abuses to the committee.

Council House Sales

18. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the total capital receipts to date from the sale of council houses and other domestic accommodation.

Mr. Gow: During the period April 1979 to December 1984, English Local Authorities and new towns received an estimated £4·7 billion through initial payments and mortgage repayments relating to council house sales.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

19. **Mr. Eggar** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the water authorities following the dispatch of his consultation letter about privatisation.

Mr. Gow: Responses to the discussion paper have been received from the water authorities collectively through the Water Authorities Association, from the Water Companies Association and from seven individual water authorities. I discussed possible privatisation with the chairman and other representatives of the Water Authorities Association on 6 June.

52. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy for the privatisation of water authorities.

Mr. Gow: I informed the House on 7 February at column 1144 that the Government would be examining the possibility of a measure of privatisation in the water industry. On 1 April, we sent the chairmen of the water authorities a discussion paper and I discussed their response with some of them on 6 June.

We shall be making a further announcement in due course.

Wildlife and Countryside Act

20. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about progress in processing the footpath provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Ramblers' Association is monitoring the implementation of the rights of way provisions in Part III of the Act on behalf of the Countryside Commission. Its first report, covering the period to the end of 1984, is expected shortly.

Rate Capping

22. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the amount spent to date by (i) all local rate-capped authorities and (ii) the city of Leicester on anti rate-capping propaganda campaigns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I do not have precise information, but Leicester and other rate-capped authorities have clearly been spending considerable amounts of ratepayers' money on anti rate capping propaganda. In Leicester's case I understand that up to £150,000 may be spent this year on such campaigning.

Private Rented Accommodation

23. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is intended to bring forward legislation to make new tenancies in the private sector free from security of tenure and rent regulations.

37. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to deregulate private rented housing.

Mr. Gow: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson).

47. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to exempt new private lettings from the provisions of the Rent Act.

Mr. Gow: I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson).

Central Berkshire Structure Plan

24. **Mr. William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive from Berkshire county council its revised proposals for the central Berkshire structure plan.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I understand that Berkshire county council is at present considering the response to the public consultation on its revised structure plan proposals. I am sure they are aware of the need to decide as soon as possible what proposals to submit to me so that its structure plan policies can be brought up to date.

Norman Shaw Building (Lift)

25. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions since its installation the new lift in Norman Shaw south building has been out of commission.

Sir George Young: 28, of which half were in the one-year guarantee period. A fault affecting the motor protection relay, which is thought to have been the main cause of these breakdowns, has now been discovered and rectified.

By-elections (London)

26. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he was consulted by the Greater London council about its proposals to expend money on the forthcoming by-elections.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No.

Sulphur Dioxide Emissions

27. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate for the fall in the volume of sulphur dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom over the next decade.

Mr. Waldegrave: Total emissions of sulphur dioxide were 3·7 million tonnes in 1983 (the latest figures available). The Department of Energy estimates that, depending on the assumptions made, total emissions will be in the range of 3·4 million to 4·2 million tonnes in 1990 and 3·1 million to 4·5 million tonnes in 2000.

Anti-fouling Paints

28. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had about his Department's proposals to ban the use of anti-fouling paints containing tributyltin on vessels under 12 m; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Public consultation on the proposals ended on 14 May and the comments received are now being considered.

City of Manchester (Boundary)

29. **Mr. Sumberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any proposals recommending the extension of the boundaries of the city of Manchester so as to incorporate parts of the parliamentary constituency of Bury, South.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

My right hon. Friend does not expect to receive any proposals from the Local Government Boundary Commission until some time after it reviews Manchester city's and Bury's administrative boundaries. That review will not commence before 1 April 1987, as explained in my answer of 19 November 1984, at column *33*.

Shorthold Tenancies

30. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of shorthold tenancies granted since 1980.

Sir George Young: Over 5,000 shorthold tenancies were created in 1981, the first year after shorthold was introduced. Information about shortholds created since 1 December 1981 is not available because the compulsory rent registration requirement for new shortholds was lifted outside London on that date.

Local Government Expenditure

31. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has taken any recent action to implement the recommendations of the Audit Commission's report on capital spending in local government.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Before the report was published, the Government were already engaged in discussions with the Local Authority Associations about the future of the system for controlling local authority capital expenditure. I have welcomed the report as a very useful input to that work, which is still going on.

Trees (Destruction)

32. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any reasonably accurate means of estimating the number of trees destroyed in the last five years.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are no comprehensive statistics available for tree loss over the last five years. My Department's current research study on monitoring landscape change should provide information on trees in hedges and woodland.

Refuse Collection

33. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities in England have put their refuse collection out to private contract.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This information is not collected centrally, but a list of bodies using private sector contractors, published in the magazine "Contract Services", includes 18 local authority refuse collection contracts.

North of England County Council Association (Report)

34. **Mr. Jack Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has now had the opportunity to study the North of England County Council Association sixth state of the region report, published in January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have studied this report. I shall be meeting representatives of the association in the near future to discuss various issues arising from the report.

Council House Sales

35. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold in England since May 1979.

Mr. Gow: From April 1979 to March 1985 about 665,000 dwellings were sold by local authorities and new towns in England. The figure for Great Britain is about 775,000.

"Coal and the Environment"

36. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the progress being made on the recommendations in Cmnd. 8877 entitled "Coal and the Environment"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Yes. Regular meetings are held with the NCB and local authority associations to review the White Paper commitments and I am satisfied with the progress that is being made.

Islington

38. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review his decision to penalise the borough of Islington in the 1985-86 rate support grant settlement.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: Proposals for implementing holdback of block grant for 1985-86 will be contained in a rate support grant supplementary report which I hope to lay before the House for approval next month.

Urban Programme

39. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to complete his consideration of the future of the traditional urban programme scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Shortly.

45. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to change the method of treatment of urban programme expenditure in relation to general local government expenditure controls.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: No.

Derelict Land

40. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current annual cost to his Department of grants made to local authorities to reclaim derelict land.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In 1984-85 grant totalling £64·5 million was paid to local authorities in respect of approved derelict land reclamation schemes in England.

Rate Rebates

41. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the total number of domestic hereditaments in England and the number of people receiving rates rebates.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The total number of domestic hereditaments in England at the beginning of 1984-85 was 18 million. Based on local authority returns, the number of rate rebate recipients in that year is estimated to be 6·15 million.

Mobile Homes (Rents)

42. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the introduction of rent regulations on the pitch rents of mobile home owners; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: We have received various representations from residents suggesting that pitch rents for mobile homes should be subject to some form of rent regulation.

We do not consider that statutory control of pitch rents is either appropriate or desirable. It would not be in the interests either of residents or site owners. Just as rent control has affected adversely the supply of the private rented housing, so it would lead to a decline in the number of mobile home sites. The Mobile Homes Act 1983 contains important safeguards for residents on pitch rents without imposing unreasonable restrictions on site owners. I believe that it strikes a reasonable balance.

Local Authorities (Housing Policy)

43. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the report published by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities on "Housing and Race: Policy and Practice in Local Authorities", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Sir George Young: I welcome the Association's initiative in producing the report. I hope that local authorities will heed its advice and recommendations, and will be discussing it with them at the next meeting of the Housing Consultative Council.

Gleneagles Agreement

44. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implications for the Gleneagles agreement of the declaration of intent by all sports associations in South Africa, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Macfarlane: Whilst the Government welcomes the principles behind the declaration of intent, it can have no implications for the Commonwealth statement on apartheid in sport. The statement, which represents the consensus view of the Commonwealth, is a reaction to the South African Government's system of apartheid, which is not affected by the declaration.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

46. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, over the past two years, how many sites for which sites of special scientific interest designation was applied for were destroyed before statutory protection was in force.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that since 1 April 1983 some 27 proposed sites of special scientific interest have been damaged following the issue of the NCC's notice of intention to notify the site. In only two of these cases does the NCC consider that the scientific interest of the whole of the site has been completely destroyed.

Improvement Grants

48. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he has received to his consultative document on improvement grants.

51. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received so far on the Green paper on home improvements.

Mr. Gow: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham).

Local Authorities (Expenditure)

49. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the latest projections for revenue spending of local authorities for the current financial year.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: We have information on the 1985-86 budgets for most authorities. In aggregate, authorities are overspending their targets by just over £200 million or by 1 per cent. This is the lowest overspend since targets were introduced four years ago. Ratepayers are reaping the benefit, with rate increases in single figures for the third year in succession.

During the 1960's and 1970's local authority current expenditure grew relentlessly in real terms by about 3½ per cent. per annum. Under this Administration, growth has been reduced to under 1 per cent. per annum. This year, budgets show that authorities are planning for no growth at all.

Water Industry

50. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many water industry consumer consultative committees supported the Government's policy on charges by the water industry for 1985-86.

Mr. Gow: Only some of the water authority consumer consultative committees have made their views known to my right hon. Friend. Of those that did so, some appreciated the need for higher investment but none welcomed higher charges.

Local Government Finance

53. Mr. Leadbitter asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he is next due to meet representatives of the local authority associations to discuss issues of local government finance.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I expect to chair the next meeting of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 23 July.

Local Government Reform

54. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the proposed timetable for establishing the residuary bodies under the Local Government Bill.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: As soon as practicable after Royal Assent.

London Residuary Body

55. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has appointed the chairman of the London Residuary Body proposed under the Local Government Bill.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) on 5 June, at columns *163-65*.

Radioactive Waste

56. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government will conduct a public investigation into all methods of radioactive waste management.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) on 6 June 1985 at column *206*.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the approximate volume of *(a)* low-level radioactive waste and *(b)* intermediate level radioactive waste arising from each stage of decommissioning and dismantling a typical Magnox nuclear power station in clearance to a green field state.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 3 June 1985 at column *38*.

Home Improvement and Repair

57. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to increase the proportion made to secure the improvement and repair of the national housing stock.

Sir George Young: Gross housing provision in England in the current year is £3,051 million, of which a substantial part will be spent on improving and repairing the housing stock.

The Government have published a Green Paper (Cmnd. 9513) outlining their proposals for improving the condition of private sector housing in England and Wales. My Department has also asked local authorities to report on the condition of their housing stock, and results are expected in July.

Football Ground Safety

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Football League concerning safety at football grounds.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement about recent discussions he has had concerning safety of sports grounds.

Mr. Macfarlane: A working group has been set up under my chairmanship to consider the implications of the extension of designation under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 to divisions 3 and 4 of the Football League. It is composed of representatives of the Football Association, the Football League, the Football Trust, the Football Grounds Improvement Trust, the Pools Promoters' Association, the Sports Council, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office. The group first met formally on 23 May.

At its next meeting on 19 June the group will be considering a report from FGIT based on surveyors' visits to all English and Scottish League grounds. This subject was also discussed when I met the Football League together with the Football Association on 17 May.

I have also met the chairman and Secretary of the Rugby League and asked them to report on what the implications would be of the extension of designation under the Act to divisions 1 and 2 of the Rugby League.

I understand that Mr. Justice Popplewell, who is chairing the inquiry established by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, will be seeking evidence from a number of sports governing bodies.

Planning Regulations (Small Businesses)

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those planning regulations which prevent individuals from starting small businesses in their homes.

Mr. Macfarlane: Sections 22(1) and 23(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 provide that planning permission is required for a material change in the use of a building. However, non-material changes of use and uses ancillary to the main use are free from control. Whether any particular change of use is material is a matter of fact and degree. Where planning permission is required, local authorities should always grant permission, having regard to all material considerations, unless there are sound and clear-cut reasons for refusal.

Rag Flock and Other Filling Materials Act 1951

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any early plans to introduce amendments to the Rag Flock and Other Filling Materials Act 1951.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to do so, but will continue to seek a suitable opportunity for such amendment.

St. Barnabas Community Centre, Bristol

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any applications for funding under the inner city programme to deal with the problems arising from defective features and facilities at St. Barnabas community centre, St. Paul's, Bristol.

Sir George Young: No. However, following recent discussions, in which representatives of Avon county council and the St. Paul's Community Association participated, an application for £45,839 capital grant under the 1985-86 urban programme, to provide equipment and furniture for the St. Barnabas community centre, is being reformulated to cover work to one of the buildings involved.

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set up an inquiry into the design and consultation about St. Barnabas community centre, St. Paul's, Bristol, funded under the inner city programme by his Department.

Sir George Young: No.

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current total cost to the inner city programme funds of St. Barnabas community centre, St. Paul's, Bristol.

Sir George Young: £360,000 capital and £8,500 revenue expenditure.

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultation took place between his Department and community interest groups before approving the funding for St. Barnabas community centre, St. Pauls, Bristol.

Sir George Young: The need for a community centre in St. Pauls was identified in one of several reports prepared jointly—following the disturbances in the area in April 1980—by Avon county council, Bristol city council and the Bristol council for racial equality. It was one of the topics discussed when a deputation from these bodies met Ministers, led by the then Secretary of State for the Home Department, in July 1981. Support for the project in principle was agreed at that time. Where a project is funded under the urban programme, it is for the applicant authority, rather than the Department, to consult interested community groups.

Disabled People (Accommodation)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was, for each of the last three years for which figures are available, the number and total value of adaptations to the accommodation of disabled people funded by each district and borough council.

Sir George Young: The numbers of dwellings for disabled people which each English local authority reported renovating and the numbers for which grants were paid to private owners and tenants in the years 1981, 1982 and 1983, appear in "Local Housing Statistics" in issues 62, 66 and 70, respectively. Estimates for England as a whole of the cost of the local authority renovations in the financial year 1981-82 and in each quarter from the second quarter of 1983 appear in table 2.16*(a)* of the quarterly "Housing and Construction Statistics" No. 20, as do the amounts of grants paid in the three years 1982 to 1984. Copies of all these publications are in the Library. The corresponding costs and grants paid information for individual local authorities is not in a readily available form.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to enable complementary information to be gathered concerning expenditure by local authority housing and social services departments on adaptations to the accommodation of disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My Department collects information on the conversion and improvement of local authority dwellings which make them suitable for the disabled, as well as information on grants paid for the renovation of dwellings for disabled persons under the Housing Acts. This information is published each quarter in table 2.16 of "Housing and Construction Statistics Part 2", copies of which are available in the Library.

Information on expenditure by local authority social services departments on adaptations to the accommodation of disabled people is collected by the Department of Health and Social Security.

Building Regulations

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he proposes to take to simplify further the building regulations.

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further steps he proposes to take to lessen the burden on the construction industry and its customers of the present system of building controls.

Mr. Gow: New simplified building regulations will come into force later this year. Thereafter they will be kept under review. Part of that continuing process will be to insure that the regulations are as simple as possible.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Local Government (Consultation)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is planning to make any changes to the way in which he consults local government following the judgment in R. v. Secretary of State for Social Services; ex parte AMA.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have no present plans to make such changes.

Rudolph Steiner Schools

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science under what statutory authority hesets the staff-pupil ratios currently required of Rudolph Steiner special schools.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no statutory powers in relation to pupil-teacher ratios in independent schools. However, independent schools seeking his approval under the Education Act 1981 as suitable for admission of children with statements of special educational needs, including those schools operated on Rudolph Steiner principles, have — as a condition of their approval — to meet standards in respect of premises, qualified staff, education and care, which are similar to those required in maintained and non-maintained special schools. The statutory provisions applying to the approval of maintained and non-maintained special schools are set out in the Education (approval of Special Schools) Regulations 1983. Additionally, guidance on the staffing of special schools is contained in the Department's circular No. 4/73.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the status of the Steiner training scheme in the context of the proposal on initial teacher training contained in the White Paper "Teaching Quality"; if he has any plans to make special provision for the Steiner training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The White Paper "Teaching Quality" announced the Government's intention to strengthen initial teacher training and to initiate a review of all initial training courses against criteria relating to the academic and professional content of courses, the practical element of training and the selection of students. Criteria were issued in April 1984 and all existing approved courses of initial training, together with proposals for new ones, are being reviewed against them by the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. Steiner training is not currently approved as leading to qualified teacher status and my right hon. Friend has no plans to modify the requirements which courses have to meet for such approval. As announced in the White Paper "Better Schools", it is the Government's intention that existing approved specialist initial training courses in special educational needs should be phased out and replaced by in-service courses for serving, qualified teachers. At my right hon. Friend's request, a meeting is being arranged with representatives of the Steiner schools.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the implications for pedagogic continuity and for the eight-year teaching commitment to a class of the requirement that Steiner-trained teachers should undertake four-year state training courses in order to acquire recognition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend acknowledges the dedication and commitment of Steiner-trained teachers and schools to the care of their pupils. He appreciates the organisational difficulties facing Steiner (and other) schools in releasing teachers to undertake further training to enable them to acquire qualified teacher status; nevertheless, he hopes they will do so. My right hon. Friend does not require all such teachers to hold qualified status, although it is a condition of approval for independent schools which wish to admit children with statements of special educational needs that they have an adequate number of qualified teachers.

ILEA (Pamphlet)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the Inner London education authority anti-sexist pamphlet which five-year-old children are being required to give their parents, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: This is a matter for the Inner London education authority. Any parents who wish to express views about the content of the pamphlet or its manner of distribution should raise the matter with the ILEA in the first instance. If they are still dissatisfied, then they should take it up with my right hon. Friend.

Medical Research Council

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what sums from what sources other than his Vote were available in each of the last five years to the Medical Research Council for financing its budget.

Sir Keith Joseph: Details of the Medical Research Council's income from the DES Vote and other sources are contained in the council's successive annual reports, copies of which are held in the Library of the House.

DEFENCE

NATO

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the cost to Britain of contributing to the NATO infrastructure budget and the NATO military budget in each financial year since 1979; and if he will arrange to provide the figure in the 1986 defence Estimates.

Mr. Stanley: United Kingdom payments to and receipts from the NATO infrastructure budget and the NATO military budget since 1979 were as follows (to the nearest £ million at outturn prices):

£ millions

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
i. United Kingdom Payments to Infrastructure Budget	19	34	38	50	57	57
ii. United Kingdom Receipts from Infrastructure	19	36	61	80	80	85
iii. United Kingdom Payments to Military Budget	22	24	25	31	35	41
iv. United Kingdom Receipts (estimated) from Military Budget	3	3	3	4	4	4

The hon. Member's request that these figures should be provided in the 1986 Statement on the Defence Estimates will be considered.

RAF Chivenor

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any site investigations currently being undertaken at RAF Chivenor with a view to the possible storage of low, intermediate or high-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Butler: No.

Trident

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the full costs of the tests planned for the United Kingdom produced Trident warhead have been included in the previously announced budget for the Trident programme.

Mr. Butler: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to his question on 24 May 1985 at column 600.

West Coast of the Uists (Survey)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations were conducted by Gardline Surveys of Great Yarmouth, presently carrying out the hydrographic survey off the west coast of the Uists under charter to the Hydrographer to the Royal Navy, prior to the survey being undertaken.

Mr. Lee: I understand that Gardline Surveys has made arrangements with the Benbecula Fishermen's Association so that the survey in question can be completed without mutual interference.

Chile

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to refrain from granting export licences for military equipment to Chile.

Mr. Channon: I have been asked to reply.

Applications for licences to export military equipment to Chile and other countries are considered individually and on their merits, taking into account all relevant factors, including the nature of the regime of the importing country and the use to which the equipment may be put.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Department of Agriculture (Scientists and Advisers)

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he plans to reduce the number of scientists and advisers employed in Northern Ireland agricultural research institutes and veterinary research institutes controlled by the Department of Agriculture;

(2) if he has any plans to privatise work presently carried out at veterinary research laboratories at Stormont and Omagh;

(3) if he plans to introduce fees for advisory services and diagnostic laboratory testing provided at Stormont and Omagh, Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: In the context of the report of a study of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service by Professor Bell and of the reductions in public expenditure on research, development and advisory work by Agricultural Departments in Great Britain announced in Cmnd. 9428, all agricultural research, development and advisory work in Northern Ireland is being reviewed. No decisions have yet been reached on staffing levels or the introduction of charging for services. There are not at present any plans to privatise the work of the veterinary research laboratories at Stormont and Omagh; the opportunities for privatisation are kept under review.

Kinsale Gas (Report)

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will publish the Deloitte, Haskins and Sells report on the Kinsale gas project; and whether he will place a copy in the Library.

Dr. Boyson: The underlying assumptions and key conclusions of the report have been made available to interested parties and the Government remain prepared to answer any specific questions about these. In common with the other investigations commissioned by the Government in connection with the gas industry, it is not intended that the detailed Deloitte Haskins and Sells report should be published.

Conservation

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what ornithological or other scientific surveys were carried out on the area of scientific interest land at

Lough Ross, Lisnakea, County Fermanagh, before the agricultural improvements recently approved by the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture went ahead; what steps are being taken to monitor and assess the impact of drainage and related works on breeding wetland birds and other aspects of nature conservation interest present on the site; and if he will make a statement on the destruction of the nest and eggs of a species of bird specially protected by the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, during the course of the agricultural scheme;

(2) if he will make a statement on his policy on the conservation of wetland areas notified as areas of special interest because of their special interest for wetland flora and fauna.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the right hon. and learned Member as soon as possible.

Housing Executive

Mr. Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will detail the measures which have been introduced by the Housing Executive to avoid the recurrence of overpayments to contractors;

(2) whether the total extra costs to the Housing Executive, resulting from the liquidation of the firm involved in the overpayment investigated by the Local Government Auditor, have been computed; and what advice his Department has given to the Housing Executive about the avoidance of a recurrence of similar cases in the future;

(3) what procedures have now been laid down by the Housing Executive to avoid losses due to solicitors withholding proceeds of sales, bankruptcy or deaths of individuals involved in transactions;

(4) what progress has been made by the Housing Executive towards reconciliation of the amount of rates collectable with payments actually made to the rating authority for 1981-82 and 1982-83 in respect of the Belfast region;

(5) how many posts are vacant in the claims management section of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and what difficulties are being experienced in filling these posts.

Mr. Chris Patten: These are matters for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I understand from the chairman that the information is not readily available. I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will revise the vetting procedure for potential recruits to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its reserve to ensure that information about the intentions of potential recruits is not obtained by terrorist organisations;

(2) what advice is given by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to persons applying to join the force or its Reserve regarding vetting procedures; and what safeguards exist to avoid drawing attention to potential recruits during visits to relatives, friends and so on during the vetting process;

(3) what procedures are laid down to ensure that civilian staff engaged in processing the applications of members of the public to join the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve maintain confidentiality;

(4) what steps are taken to ensure the confidentiality of vetting procedures for potential recruits to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its Reserve.

Mr. Scott: Vetting procedures for potential recruits to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its Reserve are designed to take account of the need to maintain confidentiality; and appropriate advice about these procedures is given by the Royal Ulster Constabulary to applicants. For security reasons, it would not be right to release details of this advice or the arrangements made to protect the identity of applicants. These arrangements, and other aspects of the vetting procedures, are however kept under regular review.

Mr. Gary Smith

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the inquiry into the fatal shooting of Mr. Gary Smith in Millfield, North Belfast, on Tuesday 28 May.

Mr. Scott: Intensive police inquiries are continuing, but as yet no one has been charged with this despicable crime.

River Roe (Restocking)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* an account of the steps taken to restock the River Roe and its tributary the Owenreagh river after the accidental poisoning of the river and the annual costs of the restocking programme to date; and if he will indicate the success of the programme and whether the insect and fish life has yet recovered.

Dr. Boyson: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Caugh Hill Water Treatment Plant

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects work on the sludge treatment works at the Caugh Hill water treatment plant to be completed and the plant to be operating.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Richmond Centre, Londonderry

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what percentage return on the capital costs of constructing the Richmond centre he expects when all the accommodation currently accepted or occupied by tenants is producing rent;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the tenants of the office accommodation in the Richmond centre in Londonderry; and if he will indicate *(a)* the minimum, *(b)* the maximum and *(c)* the average rent paid per square foot for such accommodation;

(3) what are the current annual interest charges being paid on the sums expended on the Richmond centre; and what was the total final cost of the centre;

(4) what rental is being paid by the Housing Executive, per square foot, for its accommodation in the Richmond centre, Londonderry; and what was the annual cost over each of the last five years in respect of the accommodation presently occupied by those elements of the Housing Executive which are transferring to the Richmond centre;

(5) if he will list in the *Official Report* the commercial tenants of the Richmond centre in Londonderry and indicate *(a)* the minimum, *(b)* the maximum and *(c)* the average rents being paid per square foot and the total income from such tenants.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Foyle and Craigavon Bridges (Traffic Flows)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are *(a)* the average, *(b)* the minimum and *(c)* the maximum hourly traffic flows across *(a)* the new Foyle bridge and *(b)* the Craigavon bridge; and what is the hourly capacity of each bridge.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Terrorism (Explosive Materials)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the materials known to have been used to manufacture the home-made explosive material used in Northern Ireland by terrorists and seized by the security forces in Northern Ireland since 1 January 1983, and which such materials are available for sale in Northern Ireland in significant quantities through normal commercial outlets.

Mr. Scott: There are a number of substances which can be used to produce improvised explosives. For security reasons, I do not believe it would be right if I were to list these.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what weight of explosive material, believed to be in the possession of a terrorist organisation, was seized by the security forces in Northern Ireland in each month since 1 January 1983 to the latest convenient date; and of that explosive material how much was of commercial origin and how much home-made.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Firearms Certificates

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many persons in Northern Ireland now hold firearms certificates; and of these how many are in respect of *(a)* shotguns only, *(b)* rifles only and *(c)* handguns only;

(2) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* setting out the number of *(a)* applications, *(b)* renewals and *(c)* variations of firearms certificates dealt with in each of the last six years or financial years; and how many in each case in each year were (i) granted and (ii) refused.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Terrorism

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many persons in each year since 1 January 1969 are known to have been killed by a legally-held weapon that had been stolen from its owner; in each case what kind of weapon was used; and in each year how many persons were murdered by shooting by a terrorist organisation;

(2) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each year since 1 January 1969 the number of persons who have used their own legally-held (i) rifle, (ii) handgun and (iii) shotgun, to commit a murder connected with the terrorist campaign in Northern Ireland; how many other murders, or cases of manslaughter by shooting, by the holder of a legally-held firearm, using that firearm, in each of the categories listed are known; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Maze Prison (Orderlies)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons worked as orderlies in the Maze prison during the dirty protest and the hunger strike period; of these, how many were murdered after release; if any of them are still in prison; and of those released what information he has as to how many remain in Northern Ireland and how many have left the Province.

Mr. Scott: One hundred and fifteen prisoners are recorded as having been employed as orderlies at Maze cellular prison during the period in question. Three are still in custody. Information is not readily available as to the present whereabouts or subsequent histories of those released.

Firearms

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show *(a)* how many firearms, by type, namely, handguns, rifles, shotguns or fully automatic weapons, were seized by the security forces in Northern Ireland in each year since 1969; and in each year and for each type how many were legally held weapons stolen by terrorist organisations from (i) civilians, (ii) the Royal Ulster Constabulary, (iii) the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, (iv) the Ulster Special Constabulary, (v) the Ulster Defence Regiment and (vi) the Regular Army.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Castledawson Bypass

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects work to start on the Castledawson bypass.

Mr. Chris Patten: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Maghaberry Prison

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list in the *Official Report*

the modifications made to the new prison at Maghaberry over the last two years, or financial years, which have cost more than £1,000 and the cost of each such modification;

(2) whether the roof of the new prison at Maghaberry was designed and built of fireproof materials.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what material has been used for the ceilings and roofs of the cells in the new prison at Maghaberry; and if this material was included in the original specification.

Mr. Scott: High quality reinforced concrete with an emulsion paint have been used. These materials were included in the original specification.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the doors of the new prison at Maghaberry open outwards; what width they are; and what is the width of the passage serving the cells.

Mr. Scott: For security reasons, the cell doors in the male prison open outwards. They are 620 mm wide and the passageways serving the cells are 1,500 mm wide.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Dalkon Shield

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps his Department is taking to trace women fitted with the Dalkon shield and to ensure that they are recalled for advice.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Following discussions with our Department, the manufacturers of this device wrote in January this year to all general practitioners, family planning clinics, obstetricians and gynaecologists asking them to identify any women who might still be wearing it and to recommend that they have it removed. This repeated similar action taken in 1980.

Nurses (Back Pain)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has now completed his consideration of the report on nurses' back pain submitted to his Department in August 1984 from the University of Surrey.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. As I explained in my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 27 March, at columns *253-54*, we are still considering the report.

Chiropodists (South Bedfordshire)

Mr. John Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice has been given by his Department to the South Bedfordshire health authority about its intention to cease using the services of chiropodists in private practice for National Health Service work.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We always welcome any proposals by a health authority to improve its chiropody service. I understand that south Bedfordshire is now consulting locally about its proposals. We would welcome any changes that would improve the service to the people of south Bedfordshire and provide it in a more cost effective way.

Occupational Therapists

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he has any evidence of difficulties in recruiting occupational therapists in the National Health Service; and if any information is available to him about the recruitment of occupational therapists in the private sector;

(2) if he will make a statement on the adequacy of the supply of occupational therapists in the National Health Service; and if he will indicate such information that he has about the supply of occupational therapiss in the private sector of medicine.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The results of a sample survey by health authorities last year suggested that nationally about 15 per cent. of funded posts for occupational therapists were unfilled after three months. We have had discussions with representatives of the College of Occupational Therapists. We are now considering ways in which we might increase the numbers of occupational therapy students in training. We have accepted and will implement the substantial additions to the salary scales of occupational therapists that have been recommended by the pay review body for professions allied to medicine.

We do not hold information about occupational therapists employed in the private sector.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the correlation between the trend towards greater use of community care and the demand for occupational therapists.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The greater use of community care has implications for the deployment of occupational therapists. The precise demand depends on the level, nature and organisation of National Health Service and local authority occupational therapy services in a particular locality. We are examining the organisational issues and the relationship between the two services to ensure that trained occupational therapists are used in the most effective manner.

Operational Research Service

Mr. Malone asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will announce the outcome of the studies by his Department's operational research service into specialist claims control and the comparative cost-effectiveness of other types of anti-fraud work.

Mr. Tony Newton: The summary report of the two studies by the operational research service has now been received and I have today placed in the Library of the House a copy of the report together with a detailed statement on the conclusions reached in the light of the recommendations made.

The main conclusions are *(a)* that the method of calculating benefit savings achieved by anti-fraud efforts should be revised; *(b)* that although this revision has the effect of reducing the estimated yield of benefit savings, specialist claims control remains a highly cost-effective operation and will therefore continue; *(c)* that in order to increase cost-effectiveness further, specialist claims

control teams will in future target their investigations more closely towards those cases which the study showed to be the most successful.

Mental Health Act 1983 (Code of Practice)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he anticipates receiving from the Mental Health Act Commission the draft code of practice referred to in section 118 of the Mental Health Act 1983; for how long he intends to consult individuals and organisations about the draft code; and when he anticipates laying the draft code before Parliament.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I understand that it may be some weeks before the commission submits its draft. We have already received representations from professional organisations about the need for an adequate period of wider consultation before the code of practice is laid before Parliament.

Spectacles (Prices)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is monitoring changes in the price of spectacles since 31 December 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are observing how the new expanded market in spectacles is developing. Although there are difficulties in determining the prices actually being charged for some types of spectacles, there is clear evidence that lower priced spectacles are now available.

Family Practitioner Services

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of family practitioner services' gross current expenditure has been met from charges from each year since 1974-75.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is as follows:

Year ending 31 March	*FPS charges as a percentage of gross FPS expenditure*
1975	9·6
1976	7·7
1977	7·9
1978	8·0
1979	7·3
1980	8·1
1981	9·1
1982	9·6
1983	10·0
1984	10·2
1985*	10·0

* Provisional.

Residential Homes

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the number of people in Lancashire living in residential care homes for the elderly in each of the following sectors: *(a)* voluntary, *(b)* private and *(c)* public for each of the years 1979 to 1985;

(2) what was the number of residential care homes for the elderly in Lancashire for each of the following sectors: *(a)* voluntary, *(b)* private and *(c)* public for each of the years 1979 to 1985.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is in the table.

Lancashire—Residential care for the elderly and disabled

As at 31 March	*Number of homes*				*Number or residents*						
	Statutory	*Voluntary*	*Private*	*Total*	*Statutory*		*Voluntary*		*Private*		*Total*
					under 65	*65 plus*	*under 65*	*65 plus*	*under 65*	*65 plus*	
1979	93	20	93	206	247	3,475	115	605	65	1,141	5,648
1980	95	23	95	213	241	3,599	149	590	50	1,214	5,843
1981	95	22	132	249	223	3,598	136	604	78	1,679	6,318
1982	97	23	151	271	179	3,669	168	545	67	1,854	6,482
1983	97	23	178	298	206	3,567	175	525	72	2,301	6,846
1984	98	23	243	364	197	3,561	175	538	69	3,108	7,648
1985*	100	24	319	443	155	3,512	na	na	na	na	na

* Provisional.
na = Not yet available.

Mobility and Attendance Allowances

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for each of the last three years for which figures are available, what was the average time between a decision to award on *(a)* mobility allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance and notification of the claimant of this decision; and, in each case, what was the average such time when arrangements were made for payment of the allowance to an appointee.

Mr. Newton: The available information at March of the three latest years available is as follows:

(a) Mobility Allowance

Year	*Time taken (Weeks)*
1983	2·0
1984	1·2
1985	0·6

(b) Attendance Allowance

Year	*Time taken (Weeks)*
1983	4·6
1984	4·0
1985	4·7

The time taken between the making of a decision and notification of that decision in respect of each benefit is not directly comparable because each is administered and adjudicated differently. The latest overall average time taken to clear cases from receipt of a claim to the issue of an order book is 8½ weeks for mobility allowance and 9 weeks for attendance allowance.

Action to make an appointment, where appropriate, is normally taken before a decision is made. No separate figures are kept on the average time taken to make appointments.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in what proportion of Welsh claims for *(a)* mobility allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance the examining doctor is the claimant's own general practitioner.

Mr. Newton: A claimant's own general practitioner does not, at present, undertake any examinations for mobility allowance. General practitioners who are already examining medical officers will undertake the examination of their own patients for attendance allowance but I regret that it is not possible to identify, from the records now kept, the proportion of claims where this occurs.

Disabled People (Home Adaptations)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress has been made in the collection of accurate returns from social services departments regarding their expenditure on adaptation to the homes of disabled people; when he expects this information to be available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: There has been no interruption in the collection of returns on expenditure on adaptations. As explained, however, in my reply to the right hon. Member on 24 April, at column *499*, returns on the number of cases of assistance by local authorities with adaptations was temporarily suspended following concern about the accuracy of the data. The relevant return has now been redesigned to counter this problem and was reintroduced on 1 April 1985. Preliminary results for the year ending 31 March 1986 are expected to be available by November 1986.

Headway

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations his Department has received from Headway, the National Head Injuries Association; what reply is being sent; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Since 1981 the association has been in receipt of an annual grant from the Department in recognition of the valuable work that it does. The association has recently written to me in connection with its application for increased financial assistance to enable it further to develop its work and to put its activities on to a more secure financial basis. I have replied, asking that further information be supplied to officials to enable a decision to be reached quickly on the application in the meantime, an interim payment is being made to assist with the association's immediate needs.

Surrogate Motherhood Agencies

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any details about the number of further surrogate motherhood agency agreements that have been made and the number of surrogate babies that have been born since baby Cotton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: According to recent press reports, the commercial surrogacy agency involved in the case of baby Cotton had been involved in arranging two further surrogate pregnancies, one of which had not yet come to term. We have introduced the Surrogacy Arrangements Bill which, when enacted, will prohibit the operation of commercial surrogacy agencies in this country.

Social Security Review

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the growth in the value of the benefits covered by figure 2 of volume 1 of the social security Green Paper in relation to the increase in *(a)* average male gross earnings and *(b)* average male net earnings between 1949 and 1984.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was *(a)* the total number of payments made to supplementary benefit claimants and *(b)* the total expenditure on such payments in respect of (i) community care needs as defined in paragraph 2.98 of volume 2 of the social security Green Paper, (ii) maternity and funeral expenses, (iii) other needs in respect of which single payments were made and (iv) urgent needs in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: Available information requested on single payments is estimated to be as follows (Figures are for 1983, the latest year for which a breakdown is available):

	Number of payments (000s)	*Expenditure (£ million)*
Maternity needs	171	10·2
Funeral expenses	11	2·5
Other needs	1,708	130·9

Information on single payments of supplementary benefit is not presently categorised by community care needs.

In the year ending 7 May 1985, about 234,000 one-off payments of supplementary benefit were made to meet urgent need. In addition, weekly payments were made to meet continuing urgent need on about 14,200 occasions. No information is available on the total cost of these payments.

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether deductions from benefit made to

recover loans made as part of the budgeting element of the social fund will be offset against the cash limit for that fund;

(2) whether each of his local offices will have its own cash limit in respect of the social fund;

(3) whether separate cash limits will be applied to the four elements of the social fund;

(4) whether the lump sum to be paid to widows on breavement will be disregarded in the means test for help with funeral costs;

(5) how many losers and how many gainers there would be in each of the following categories of supplementary benefit claimants if each supplementary benefit claimant who is *(a)* over 60 years, *(b)* unemployed, *(c)* a single parent, *(d)* long-term sick or disabled or *(e)* caring for the sick or disabled, had his or her requirements assessed at the average for that category; what in each case would be the average gain and the average loss; and what in each case would be the maximum gain and the maximum loss;

(6) if he has made any estimate of the likely rate of take-up of help from the social fund with funeral costs;

(7) if he has made any estimate of the proportion of *(a)* births and *(b)* deaths which will qualify for help from the social fund with maternity and funeral costs, respectively.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

From October 1985 (Proposed)

	Employer (per cent.)				*Employee (per cent.)*			
	Total earnings within the range				*Total earnings within the range*			
	LEL to £54·99	*£55·00 to £89·99*	*£90·00 to £129·99*	*£130·00 or more*	*LEL to £54·99*	*£55·00 to £89·99*	*£90·00 to £265·00*
Not-contracted-out							
Rate payable on total earnings	5·0	7·0	9·0	10·45	5·0	7·0	9·0
Contracted-out							
Rate payable on portion of earnings below LEL	5·0	7·0	9·0	*10·45	5·0	7·0	9·0
Rate payable on portion of earnings between LEL and UEL	0·9	2·9	4·9	6·35	2·85	4·85	6·85

* Also payable on any earnings in excess of £265·00.

No decisions have yet been taken about what rates of national insurance contribution employers and employees respectively should pay during and after the proposed phasing out of the state earnings-related pension scheme.

National Insurance

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of national insurance contributions are met by employers and employees, respectively, in respect of *(a)* contracted-in employment and *(b)* contracted-out employment; and what proportion he estimates will be met by each party in respect of the new common rate of national insurance contribution.

Mr. Whitney: The proportions of national insurance contributions which are met by employers and employees in respect of not-contracted-out and contracted-out employments are shown by the following percentage rates of contributions on earnings:

From April 1985

	Employer (per cent.)	*Employee (per cent.)*
Not-contracted out	10·45	9·0
Contracted-out	10·45 up to the LEL*	9·0 up to the LEL
	+6·35 between the LEL and UEL†	+6·85 between the LEL and UEL

* Lower earnings limit (£35·50 per week).

† Upper earnings limit (£265·00 per week).

EC (Welfare Support)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to which European Economic Community countries provide financial support and where appropriate, the way it is provided to destitute or unemployed visitors or settled non-citizens.

Mr. Whitney: Such information as is available is contained in the Department's publication. "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the Member States of the European Communities, Portugal and Spain (Position at 1 January 1984)," a copy of which is in the Library.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what publicity has been given to the eligibility of blind people for the severe disablement allowance by his Department; and what is his estimate of the proportion of those eligible who have claimed, or are in the process of claiming, the severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Newton: Our £400,000 publicity campaign designed to ensure maximum take-up of severe disablement allowance (and non-contributory invalidity pension — including house-wives' non-contributory invalidity pension—the benefit which severe disablement allowance replaced) utilised the national newspapers and magazines and specialist, professional and disabled people's media, including publications specifically for people with a visual handicap. In addition, the publicity campaign was backed up by a special exercise to invite claims from those, including blind people, drawing supplementary benefit who appeared to have underlying title to non-contributory invalidity pension.

I regret that information is not available on the number of blind people who may be eligible for severe disablement

allowance and the proportion of those who have claimed, or are in the process of claiming it. Overall, however, we have received over 24,000 new claims for severe disablement allowance and our special exercise for people drawing supplementary benefit has resulted, as at 7 May, in the issue of 61,000 invitations and the receipt of some 36,000 non-contributory invalidity pension claims.

Lipotriad

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which drug or drugs on the limited list meets the clinical need of the drug Lipotriad in the treatment of serious eye disorders.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Lipotriad is a multi-vitamin preparation which is of no proven efficacy in the treatment of macular degeneration. An adequate range of vitamins remains available on NHS prescription for use in cases where they are clinically indicated.

Complaints Procedures

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to establish a complaints procedure for hospitals directly managed by his Department.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 June 1985, c. *441*]: Each of the four special hospitals for which we have direct responsibility—Broadmoor, Moss Side, Park Lane and Rampton hospitals — has established procedures for dealing with complaints. A proportion of complaints relating to these hospitals come direct to Ministers or officials in the Department, where procedures for dealing with them are also well established. In reporting in October 1984 on matters which he had been asked to investigate, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration expressed his satisfaction with the way complaints made by a patient in Broadmoor hospital had been dealt with, both at the hospital and in the Department.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to prevent National Health Service doctors entering into contracts which would impede investigations pursuant to the Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 June 1985, c. *441*]: We see no need to introduce such legislation.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which of the new benefits mentioned in his Green paper on the welfare state will rise in line with inflation.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 June 1985, c. *290-91*]: The Government stand by their pledge to uprate retirement pensions and linked long-term benefits in line with rising prices. Future upratings of other benefits will be determined as they are now in the light of circumstances at the time.

Health Authorities (Ancillary Services)

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Offical Report* details of the progress made by district health authorities in England in putting their ancillary services out to competitive tendering, including the savings made to the latest date available.

Mr. John Patten: The position on 31 March 1985 is shown in the tables. We are aware of 66 contracts which have been let to private contractors and these will realise an estimated £10·4 million in annual savings. Fifty-five tenders have been secured by in-house organisations and these will produce estimated annual savings of £2·7 million.

Districts	*Percentage of service put out to tender*			*Estimated annual savings*
	Catering	*Domestic*	*Laundry*	£
NORTHERN RHA				
Hartlepool	nil	3	nil	
North Tees	nil	nil	nil	
South Tees	4	3	nil	40,000
East Cumbria	nil	nil	nil	
South Cumbria	nil	nil	100	
West Cumbria	nil	3	nil	
Darlington	nil	nil	nil	
Durham	nil	nil	nil	
North West Durham	nil	nil	nil	
South West Durham	nil	nil	nil	
Newcastle	5	48	22	119,000
North Tyneside	nil	68	100	6,000
South Tyneside	nil	nil	nil	
Sunderland	nil	nil	nil	
Northumberland	11	15	29	36,000
Gateshead	nil	nil	nil	
YORKSHIRE RHA				
Hull	nil	nil	nil	
East Yorkshire	nil	nil	nil	
Grimsby	nil	3	nil	
Scunthorpe	61	nil	nil	75,000
Northallerton	nil	nil	100	
York	nil	19	nil	156,000
Scarborough	nil	nil	100	27,000
Harrogate	nil	14	nil	
Bradford	nil	6	nil	
Airedale	nil	nil	nil	
Calderdale	100	nil	100	
Huddersfield	nil	nil	nil	
Dewsbury	nil	nil	100	64,000
Leeds Eastern	nil	nil	nil	
Leeds Western	13	14	nil	30,000
Wakefield	nil	nil	nil	
Pontefract	nil	nil	100	49,000
TRENT RHA				
North Derbyshire	31	22	nil	
South Derbyshire	nil	4	nil	
Leicestershire	nil	nil	nil	
North Lincolnshire	1	8	nil	
South Lincolnshire	18	17	nil	
Bassetlaw	nil	8	nil	
Central Notts	nil	nil	nil	
Nottingham	5	8	9	58,000
Barnsley	15	23	nil	
Doncaster	6	13	nil	
Rotherham	nil	nil	nil	
Sheffield	nil	nil	32	30,000
EAST ANGLIAN RHA				
Cambridge	41	58	nil	455,000
Peterborough	nil	38	nil	115,000
Huntingdon	nil	96	nil	490,000
Great Yarmouth/Waverley	nil	64	100	179,000
West Norfolk/Wisbech	nil	nil	100	40,000
Norwich	nil	36	nil	647,000
West Suffolk	nil	42	nil	30,000
East Suffolk	nil	15	100	42,000
NORTH WEST THAMES RHA				
North Bedfordshire	nil	nil	100	
South Bedfordshire	87	34	nil	80,000
North Hertfordshire	nil	1	nil	

Districts	Percentage of service put out to tender			Estimated annual savings £
	Catering	Domestic	Laundry	
North West Hertfordshire	nil	nil	100	33,000
South West Hertfordshire	nil	nil	nil	
East Hertfordshire	nil	nil	nil	
Barnet	29	nil	nil	
Harrow	nil	nil	100	15,000
Hillingdon	32	69	nil	105,000
Ealing	nil	60	100	
Hounslow/Spelthorne	nil	14	100	254,000
Hammersmith/Fulham	nil	nil	nil	
Paddington & North Kensington	49	13	100	245,000
Victoria	nil	59	49	950,000
Brent	nil	nil	nil	
NORTH EAST THAMES RHA				
Barking	nil	nil	100	
Basildon	nil	nil	100	
Bloomsbury	nil	nil	nil	
City & Hackney	nil	nil	nil	
Enfield	nil	nil	nil	
Hampstead	nil	nil	nil	
Haringey	nil	nil	nil	
Islington	nil	nil	nil	
Mid Essex	nil	43	100	404,000
Newham	nil	2	nil	
Redbridge	nil	45	nil	323,000
Tower Hamlets	nil	3	nil	
Waltham Forest	nil	7	nil	
West Essex	nil	22	100	46,000
Southend	nil	nil	100	165,000
North East Essex	11	10	nil	82,000
SOUTH EAST THAMES RHA				
Bexley	nil	7	nil	
Brighton	7	nil	nil	
Bromley	53	100	nil	1,040,000
Camberwell	nil	nil	100	56,000
Canterbury/Thanet	nil	100	nil	
Dartford/Gravesham	nil	nil	nil	
Eastbourne	37	1	nil	
Greenwich	nil	nil	nil	
Hastings	nil	nil	nil	
Lewisham/North Southwark	nil	nil	nil	
Maidstone	71	77	100	441,000
Medway	nil	83	nil	188,000
South East Kent	52	19	nil	
Tunbridge Wells	nil	26	nil	
West Lambeth	13	nil	100	
SOUTH WEST THAMES RHA				
North West Surrey	nil	31	100	50,000
West Surrey/North East Hants	6	nil	94	32,000
East Surrey	nil	53	36	590,000
Mid Surrey	30	nil	30	55,000
South West Surrey	15	17	nil	240,000
Mid Downs	nil	31	nil	140,000
Chichester	nil	59	nil	329,000
Worthing	53	49	nil	
Kingston/Esher	8	nil	79	193,000
Croydon	nil	nil	62	54,000
Richmond/Twickenham/ Roehampton	15	19	93	252,000
Wandsworth	nil	26	nil	
Merton/Sutton	15	53	26	778,000
WESSEX RHA				
East Dorset	28	4	100	
West Dorset	2	nil	nil	
Portsmouth	nil	nil	nil	
Southampton	nil	8	17	45,000
Winchester	8	6	100	
Basingstoke	nil	nil	nil	
Salisbury	nil	nil	nil	
Swindon	nil	nil	nil	
Bath	nil	100	nil	
Isle of Wight	nil	nil	nil	
OXFORD RHA				
East Berkshire	nil	7	nil	61,000
West Berkshire	nil	3	nil	45,000
Aylesbury Vale	nil	54	nil	360,000
Milton Keynes	nil	51	nil	59,000
Wycombe	nil	nil	nil	
Kettering	nil	22	nil	
Northampton	1	nil	nil	
Oxford	nil	36	nil	410,000
SOUTH WESTERN RHA				
Cheltenham	nil	nil	100	31,000
Gloucester	nil	nil	100	53,000
Frenchay	24	5	nil	76,000
Bristol/Weston	nil	nil	nil	
Southmead	4	5	100	51,000
Somerset	42	36	100	304,000
Exeter	nil	nil	nil	
North Devon	nil	100	100	11,000
Torbay	33	nil	nil	8,000
Plymouth	nil	nil	100	60,000
Cornwall/Isle of Scilly	nil	12	46	211,000
WEST MIDLANDS RHA				
Mid Staffordshire	7	nil	nil	9,000
South Warwickshire	nil	15	nil	84,000
Kidderminster	nil	nil	nil	
Shropshire	nil	nil	nil	
North Staffordshire	nil	nil	nil	
Coventry	nil	1	nil	
Bromsgrove & Redditch	nil	nil	nil	
Herefordshire	nil	1	nil	
Rugby	nil	nil	100	
North Warwickshire	nil	3	100	70,000
Solihull	37	nil	nil	30,000
Wolverhampton	nil	nil	nil	
Walsall	8	nil	nil	
North Birmingham	nil	nil	nil	
Dudley	nil	nil	nil	
Sandwell	nil	nil	nil	
East Birmingham	nil	27	nil	154,000
Central Birmingham	2	2	nil	
South Birmingham	nil	nil	nil	
South East Staffordshire	nil	22	nil	74,000
Worcester	nil	12	nil	21,000
West Birmingham	nil	nil	nil	
MERSEY RHA				
Southport/Formby	nil	6	nil	
South Sefton	nil	nil	nil	
St. Helens/Knowsley	nil	nil	nil	
Wirral	36	nil	nil	
Liverpool	nil	nil	nil	
Macclesfield	nil	31	nil	
Malton	18	19	nil	46,000
Warrington	nil	38	nil	231,000
Chester	nil	12	nil	61,000
Crewe	nil	23	nil	85,000
NORTH WESTERN RHA				
North Manchester	nil	nil	nil	
Central Manchester	nil	nil	nil	
Wigan	nil	nil	nil	
Stockport	39	nil	nil	
Tameside/Glossop	28	nil	nil	
Bolton	nil	nil	nil	
Bury	18	13	nil	
Chorley/South Ribble	nil	nil	nil	
Preston	nil	nil	nil	
Lancaster	nil	nil	nil	
Blackpool	nil	nil	nil	

Districts	Percentage of service put out to tender			Estimated annual savings £
	Catering	Domestic	Laundry	
Burnley	nil	nil	nil	
South Manchester	nil	nil	nil	
Trafford	nil	9	nil	
Oldham	nil	nil	nil	
Salford	nil	nil	nil	
West Lancashire	nil	nil	nil	
Blackburn	nil	nil	nil	
Rochdale	nil	2	nil	

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to which North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries have *(a)* supported and *(b)* abstained from any declaration in the United Nations or elsewhere calling for a freeze on nuclear arsenals; and what information he has as to the terms of each such declaration.

Mr. Rifkind: At the 1984 session of the United Nations general assembly three resolutions calling for a nuclear weapons freeze were tabled.

Resolution 39/63C, sponsored by Mexico and Sweden, was supported by Denmark and Greece; Iceland, Norway and Spain abstained; all other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation voted against.

Resolution 39/63G, sponsored by India, was supported by Denmark, Greece and Iceland; Norway and Spain abstained; all other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation members voted against.

Resolution 38/151D, sponsored by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, was supported by Greece. All other NATO members voted against.

Copies of these resolutions are being placed in the Library of the House.

Israel (Trade Boycott)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will ensure that the answer by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) on 23 May, *Official Report*, column *512*, about United Kingdom opposition to attempts by third parties to restrict United Kingdom trade with Israel, is circulated to all diplomatic missions overseas, to be conveyed to Governments of their host countries, as appropriate.

Mr. Renton: Our diplomatic missions and foreign Governments are well aware of the Government's long-standing opposition to the Arab boycott.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, pursuant to the Minister of State's reply on 23 May, *Official Report*, column *512*, about the Arab trade boycott of Israel, he will now reconsider the practice of departmental authentification of signatures on Arab boycott documents; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: As my right hon. and learned Friend made clear in his reply to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on 14 November 1984, at columns 673-4, we have concluded that it would not be right to change our present policy or the practice of authentication. It is a standard legal procedure and does no more than confirm the validity of the signature.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what report he has received from Her Majesty's ambassador in Washington about the recent report from the Office of Anti-Boycott Compliance for the fiscal year ended September 1984 regarding alleged compliance by United Kingdom subsidiaries of American companies with Arab boycott requests; what comparable figures were given for other European Community countries; and whether he will discuss this matter with the United States Administration.

Mr. Renton: It is for the companies concerned to decide what action, if any, they should take about any such allegations.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what report he has received from Her Majesty's ambassador in Washington about the fine payable by the Atlanta branch of Lloyd's Bank International Limited on the grounds of illegal compliance with the Arab trade boycott; and what guidance is given to British firms operating in the United States of America about the need for strict compliance with American legislation.

Mr. Renton: We noted reports that in May 1983 Lloyds Bank International Limited paid a civil penalty of $25,000 for allegedly infringing US legislation on the boycott. The Department of Trade and Industry is ready to advise companies about all aspects of the boycott's operations. It remains our view that individual companies should decide in the light of their own commercial interests what attitude to take to the boycott.

United Nations (Cambodia Representation)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the presence of the Khmer Rouge movement in the coalition of interests currently representing Cambodia in the United Nations general assembly.

Mr. Rifkind: We support the aims of the resistance coalition as a whole, which is seeking to bring about the complete withdrawal from Cambodia of Vietnam's illegal occupation forces. However, we have no dealings with the Khmer Rouge; the withdrawal of our formal recognition of the Pol Pot regime was announced on 6 December 1979.

Mr. Ahmed Walid Rajab

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the contacts between his Department and the Syrian embassy regarding the conduct of Mr. Ahmed Walid Rajab, Counsellor for Arab League Affairs; and if he will list the dates on which his Department took active steps in this matter.

Mr. Renton: This case first came to our notice in August 1983 when the Syrian ambassador told officials that the landlord, Mr. Chaffey, had forced an entry into the flat at 21 Stonor road where Mr. Rajab was living. Our policy in civil disputes of this kind is that the parties should exhaust all legal remedies open to them before the Government can consider intervening. In response to questions from both parties, we gave advice on this basis. We also gave factual information on the status of Mr. Rajab.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office became directly involved in February 1985 when we were told by Mr. Chaffey's solicitors that Mr. Rajab was not ready to observe a court order to vacate Mr. Chaffey's flat.

The head of protocol department in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office wrote to the Syrian ambassador on

16 April and on 14 May, and summoned him to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 31 May to protest strongly about Mr. Rajab's unacceptable behaviour in ignoring a court order.

The ambassador was warned at that stage that we would request the removal of Mr. Rajab from this country if he did not vacate the flat by 14 June.

In view of the stringent standards which we now expect from the Diplomatic Corps in accordance with the criteria layed down in the recent White Paper on diplomatic immunities and privileges, we have today told the Syrian ambassador that, in view of Mr. Rajab's unacceptable behaviour, it would be best to transfer him from this country soon.

William and Mary (Tercentenary)

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made with arrangements to mark the tercentenary of William and Mary in 1988.

Mr. Renton: The British Committee described in the reply by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) to my hon. Friend on 30 July 1984, at column 65, has been set up, together with a number of specialist sub-committees. Mr. Charles Tidbury has taken over as chairman from Sir Charles Troughton, and the committee will hold its second meeting on 18 June.

We anticipate a programme of commemorative events in 1988-89 which will be a fitting celebration and reminder of our joint cultural heritage with the Dutch people, and which will help further to strengthen our already excellent relations with The Netherlands.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 13 June 1985

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nissan UK (Undertakings)

Mr. Cyril Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what undertakings regarding spin-off benefits for United Kingdom suppliers Nissan Motors UK made to Her Majesty's Government in return for financial assistance; to what extent those undertakings, with particular reference to control gear, have been fulfilled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: A statement on Nissan was made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 1 February 1984. Whilst not bound to achieve specific local content levels in its purchases of machinery and equipment, the company is seeking to provide the maximum practicable opportunity for local suppliers to compete in this area. My Department is in close touch with Nissan on all purchasing matters, but sourcing decisions on individual items must remain a matter for the company's commercial judgment.

Origin Marking Regulations

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the Government's response to the European Court judgment 207/83 on the United Kingdom's origin marking regulations.

Mr. Fletcher: The Government are consulting bodies representative of those likely to be affected on how best to implement the court's ruling.

EC Trade Mark Office

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects a decision to be taken on the location of the European Community trade mark office.

Mr. Butcher: I understand that the Commission hopes to make a proposal to the Council of Ministers on the site of the office in the spring of 1986.

British Telecom (Shares)

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether City firms involved in the sale of British Telecom shares, as underwriters and in other capacities, had any privileged access to the shares; and whether the same limitations as applied to the general public, in terms of the maximum number of shares allotted to each purchaser, also applied to such firms and their employees.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 June 1985, c. *136*]: Fifty-five per cent. of the United Kingdom offer of British Telecom shares was placed at the beginning of the offer period with over 2,000 institutional investors, who also undertook to purchase any of the shares to be offered to the public which remained unsold at the end of the offer period. These arrangements were set out in the prospectus and noted in my hon. Friend's statement of 16 November 1984. The remainder of the United Kingdom offer was allocated to members of the public, BT employees and other firms and institutions, on the basis announced by my hon. Friend on 3 December 1984. Employees of City firms involved in the offer were subject to the same application and allocation process as members of the public.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Vagrancy Acts

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the implications of the new regulations on board and lodging accommodation payments for the operation of the Vagrancy Acts.

Mr. Mellor: The Vagrancy Acts will continue to operate as previously. The general effect of the new regulations will be closely monitored by the Department of Health and Social Security.

Police Complaints Commissioner

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what transport is provided for the new Police Complaints Commissioner.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Arrangements have been made for the present chairman of the Police Complaints Authority to retain the access on the Government car service which he enjoyed in his former post as Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and Health Service Commissioner. The service is provided subject to the authority's repayment of the costs.

Crime Prevention

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Standing Committee on crime prevention has considered the case for encouraging better lighting in inner city areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: At the request of the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention, the British Standards Institution is preparing a guide for architects and planners on the security of buildings. The first chapter, which is to be published and widely disseminated later this year, will include advice on lighting as a preventive measure. The Institution of Public Lighting Engineers has agreed to inform the Home Office crime prevention unit of any projected major new lighting schemes in inner city areas so that the possibility of evaluating their effect on street crime can be considered.

Prison Sentences (Statistics)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of convicted *(a)* males and *(b)* females were given prison sentences of between three and six months in magistrates courts in 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the length of custodial sentences is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales": for 1981 and 1982, for immediate

imprisonment, in table 7.18 of the volume for 1982 (Cmnd. 9048) and for 1983 in supplementary tables Vol. 1, tables S1.3 (partly suspended sentences) and S1.4 (unsuspended sentences) and table 7B of Cmnd. 9349 (youth custody). Corresponding information for 1984 is not yet available.

Sri Lankans (Residence)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Sri Lankans were admitted to permanent residence in the United Kingdom in each year since 1955; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The total numbers of Sri Lankan citizens accepted for settlement in the United Kingdom in each of the years 1973 to 1984 were published in the annual Command Paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics" (tables 14*(a)* and 18 of the issues for 1978 and 1984, Cmnd. 7565 and 9544 respectively). Comprehensive information is not available on Sri Lankan acceptances for settlement for the years 1963 to 1973; before 1 July 1962 Commonwealth citizens were not subject to immigration control.

Holloway Prison

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any long-term plans to provide a regional psychiatric facility for disturbed women prisoners at Holloway prison.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans his Department has to improve care and treatment facilities for disturbed women at Holloway prison.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend is awaiting the report of the project committee set up to advise on the organisation and future role of Holloway prison, including its psychiatric facilities. The project committee has been asked to report at the beginning of July and he will make a statement as soon as practicable thereafter.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the terms of reference of his Department's present inquiry into Holloway prison; and whether the inquiry will take oral evidence from employees, inmates and voluntary organisations concerned with prisoners' welfare.

Mr. Mellor: The terms of reference of the Holloway project committee are:

To prepare a plan for the development of Holloway Prison as the main local prison for women in the south of England, within the framework of the statement of functions of Prison Department establishments recently approved by the Prisons Board and having regard to the staff and the resources likely to be available and their optimum deployment; and, in particular:

(i) to assess what population of prisoners, both in numbers and in composition, can most appropriately be held in Holloway prison;

(ii) to identify any specialist function currently performed at Holloway prison which could be better and more appropriately performed elsewhere within the women's prison system, having regard to Holloway's role as a local prison;

(iii) to consider the regimes that may best be operated in Holloway prison; with the aim of enabling the prisoners to spend the maximum time possible out of their cells and to have access to a variety of activities;

and to report to the Director General of the Prison Service by 1 July 1985.

The committee has not invited oral submissions. It is open to anyone to send comments in writing.

Mental Health Act 1983 (Accused Persons)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of cases in which the courts have exercised their powers under the Mental Health Act 1983 to remand, where appropriate, accused persons to hospital for reports and treatment and as to the number of cases where places have not been found for such prisoners by regional health authorities.

Mr. Mellor: The number of persons remanded under the Mental Health Act 1983 has been collected centrally from the courts only from the beginning of 1985 and information will not become available until 1986. A court may exercise these powers only where arrangements have been made for the person's admission to hospital and information is not collected centrally about the number of cases in which a hospital place was not available. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services expects to have later this year information about the number of admissions to hospital under these powers during the final quarter of 1984 and in the autumn of 1986 to have information on such admissions during 1985.

Stafford Prison

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the effect on the certified normal accommodation of Crescent hall, Stafford prison, of the introduction of integral sanitation; what is the rationale behind the new certified normal accommodation; how the space available in a cell now certified fit for double occupation in Crescent hall compares with that in a double cell in a new prison; and if he will make a statement on the implications of the change in certified normal accommodation in this case for estimates as to the cell loss anticipated from the introduction of integral sanitation into all local prisons and remand centres.

Mr. Mellor: The scheme to introduce integral sanitation in the crescent wing at Stafford was approved as a pilot project. One half of the wing was completed in September 1984, and the new facilities are being evaluated in use. It is expected that work on the second half of the wing will be completed later this year. The pilot scheme was approved on the basis that there would be no loss of certified normal accommodation. The proposal was to use some of the refurbished cells, which differ in size, for single occupancy and some as two-man cells, and the current cell certificates reflect this position. The size of the two-man cells is approximately 10·15m^{2}including 2·25m^{2}provided by the separate toilet annex. The size of two-man cells being planned for new establishments is not less than 9·2m^2, inclusive of the sanitary annex. No implications for any change in certified normal accommodation in local prisons and remand centres can be drawn until the Stafford scheme is complete and fully evaluated.

Detained Schoolchildren (Kirkby)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief

constable of Merseyside on how many schoolchildren were detained in Kirkby police station on 18 and 19 April; how long each one was detained; why they were not allowed to telephone their parents, relatives or solicitors; why no food or drinks were provided; and why some were detained from 11am to after 8 pm.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Yes. I shall make inquiries of the chief constable of Merseyside and will write to the hon. Member.

Young Persons

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of people aged between 14 and 21 years have experienced a custodial sentence.

Mr. Mellor: An estimate is available only for those born in 1953 and 1958 from the sample study of their convictions, results of which were published in "Home Office Statistical Bulleting Issue 7/85". About 2 per cent. of such persons had received a custodial sentence by the age of 21.

Penal Establishments

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the budget in each penal establishment for *(a)* dental treatment and *(b)* medical services.

Mr. Mellor: The Department meets the patient's share of the National Health Service charge for dental treatment received by prisoners. The financial allocations to each establishment for this purpose, and for medical services generally, are set out in the table. "Medical Services" includes the provision of drugs, dressings and small items of medical equipment, and contributions to charges for dental and optical treatment.

Name of Establishment	*Medical services*	*Dental Contributions*
Acklington	12,775	4,000
Albany	5,785	4,650
Aldington	2,315	300
Ashford	15,815	8,750
Ashwell	5,805	4,650
Askham Grange	5,015	2,800
Aylesbury	5,050	3,000
Bedford	8,555	1,800
Birmingham	53,225	9,250
Blantyre House	1,900	50
Blundeston	23,110	8,250
Bristol	35,005	7,750
Brixton	63,350	20,750
Brockhill	315	100
Buckley Hall	250	150
Bullwood Hall	10,040	2,500
Camp Hill	9,260	8,000
Campsfield House	60	—
Canterbury	15,840	6,750
Cardiff	25,990	7,250
Channings Wood	15,475	8,000
Chelmsford	12,725	4,000
Coldingley	11,830	5,500
Cookham Wood	80	—
Dartmoor	23,560	5,200
Deerbolt Camp	11,385	7,500
Dorchester	8,385	3,000
Dover	10,070	3,900
Drake Hall	2,405	1,500
Durham	45,960	8,300
East Sutton Park	1,105	850
Eastwood Park	50	—
Erlestoke	7,455	4,000
Everthorpe	4,960	1,300
Exeter	19,810	6,200
Featherstone	9,915	8,000
Feltham/Finnamore	17,285	5,200
Ford	23,520	9,750
Foston Hall	1,270	—
Frankland	18,760	4,000
Gartree	16,350	7,000
Gaynes Hall	—	—
Glen Parva	21,855	5,600
Gloucester	17,730	9,250
Grendon/Springhill	48,805	6,000
Guys Marsh	8,590	5,700
Haslar	3,285	75
Hatfield/Gringley	3,900/1,100	3,600/1,000
Havering	9,490	6,250
Hewell Grange	2,250	1,800
Highpoint	31,675	16,000
Hindley	3,315	2,575
Hollesley Bay	7,610	1,000
Holloway	42,260	10,000
Hull	9,935	4,750
Huntercombe	4,865	3,800
Kingston	8,965	3,000
Kirkham	11,765	7,500
Kirklevington	920	—
Lancaster	7,810	6,350
Latchmere House	1,215	750
Leeds	46,895	10,500
Leicester	24,090	6,750
Lewes	27,450	5,400
Leyhill	16,515	6,000
Lincoln	24,190	10,400
Liverpool	110,775	22,250
Long Lartin	26,875	12,650
Lowdham Grange	10,780	8,000
Low Newton	80	—
Maidstone	47,305	15,000
Manchester	52,505	8,000
Medomsley	1,325	200
New Hall	370	65
Northallerton	3,380	2,750
Northeye	27,110	14,000
North Sea Camp	1,380	275
Norwich	27,575	6,000
Nottingham	9,700	2,750
Onley	2,245	1,500
Oxford	6,765	5,000
Parkhurst	64,260	6,750
Pentonville	88,260	34,000
Portland	11,860	4,000
Preston	7,795	6,000
Pucklechurch	685	355
Ranby	22,805	15,000
Reading	11,085	3,875
Risley	64,755	14,000
Rochester	39,705	12,900
Rudgate	8,235	3,600
Send	1,680	—
Shepton Mallet	11,555	7,000
Shrewsbury	4,045	3,400
Stafford	24,980	8,750
Standford Hill	22,710	11,650
Stoke Heath	15,350	14,000
Styal	6,255	4,300
Sudbury	17,405	8,000
Swansea	14,035	5,250
Swinfen Hall	2,250	1,450
Thorp Arch	1,915	85
Usk	3,205	1,700
Verne	24,655	8,500
Wakefield	54,510	8,000
Wandsworth	81,980	15,500

Name of Establishment	Medical services	Dental Contributions
Wellingborough	9,970	6,000
Werrington	2,890	1,700
Wetherby	8,155	4,100
Whatton	1,255	85
Winchester	26,280	6,900
Wormwood Scrubs	83,560	25,000
Wymott	18,775	9,000

Note: In some cases where a nil or nominal allocation is shown above a smaller establishment will 'feed off' a larger one nearby for its medical supplies.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the industrial action currently being taken by staff in penal establishments, the establishments concerned and the number of staff involved; and what were the stated reasons for the dispute and the effects of the dispute.

Mr. Mellor: In addition to a number of disputes at particular establishments over local matters such as manning levels and efficiency improvements, there are four national disputes relating to procedural issues on the use of force reports, procedures for internal investigations, non-co-operation in the use of radio-pagers and non-co-operation in the supply of statistical information regarding movements to courts. Discussions are taking place or are to take place on the resolution of all these issues. None of the disputes at present has had any more than a marginal effect on prisoners and others.

Care of Children (Steering Group)

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what are the criteria by which appointments were made to the steering group appointed to review the arrangements by which information is handled on the criminal background of those seeking positions where they will have substantial opportunities for access to children;

(2) if he will list the names of all the members on the steering group appointed to review the arrangements by which information is handled on the criminal background of those seeking positions where they will have substantial opportunities for access to children;

(3) if he will make it his policy that the steering group appointed to review the arrangements by which information is handled on the criminal background of those seeking positions where they will have substantial opportunities for access to children will seek evidence or proposals from the Association of Directors of Social Services, before reporting;

(4) if he will make it his policy that the review of the arrangements by which information is handled on the criminal background of those seeking positions where they will have substantial opportunity for access to children will seek evidence and proposals from all bodies with a direct interest in the outcome of the review before it reports.

Mr. Mellor: The review was set up in the wake of the Colin Evans case to devise as a matter of urgency a system for disclosing criminal backgrounds in relevant cases for the protection of children. The steering group supervising the work, which was kept small to facilitate a speedy review, includes a director of social services and representatives of other major central and local government interests, and the police. Other bodies are being consulted in the course of the review and there will be an opportunity for comments on recommendations resulting from the review.

The Membership of the steering group is:

Mr. D. E. R. Faulkner (Chairman)—Home Office
Mrs. J. Hale—Inner London Education Authority
Mr. D. James—Director of Social Services, Leeds
Mr. B. Johnson—Chief Constable, Lancashire
Mr. D. Pullen—County Secretary, Buckinghamshire
Mr. E. Soden—Home Office
Mr. D. Wilkinson — Department of Education and Science
Commander D. Williams — National Identification Bureau
Mr. C. Wilson — Department of Health and Social Security

Observers:
Mr. R. Scott—Scottish Office
Mrs. D. Brown—Northern Ireland Office

Police Establishment (Newham)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the police establishment for the two police divisions covering Newham and the number available for duty in the area for each month since March 1984; how many in the establishment were sent out on weekly tours of duty in mining areas; and how many such weekly tours there have been since March 1984.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There are no fixed establishments for police divisions in the Metropolitan police district. An establishment is set for each police district and it is for the district commander to deploy available manpower to his divisions according to operational needs and priorities.

The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that the establishment and strength of "K" district (which includes the borough of Newham) for each month since March 1984 are as set out in the table. Officers from "K" district were sent to the mining areas for periods of duty ranging from one to eight days on 62 occasions between March 1984 and March 1985. The average number of officers sent on each occasion was 39.

Metropolitan Police "K" District
Police establishment and strength (March 1984 to May 1985)

	District establishment	District strength
1984		
March	1,320	1,215
April	1,320	1,221
May	1,320	1,224
June	1,320	1,203
July	1,320	1,201
August	1,320	1,209
September	1,320	1,204
October	1,320	1,214
November	1,320	1,203
December	1,320	1,209
1985		
January	1,320	1,202
February	1,321	1,202
March	1,321	1,198
April	1,321	1,196
May	1,321	1,200

Prisoners (Assaults)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being proposed to

determine the precise situation regarding the assault on one of the defendants of the Newham seven trial at the Central Criminal Court; and what measures are taken to protect prisoners from such assaults.

Mr. Mellor: The incident is being investigated by the City of London police and it would not be appropriate for me to comment at this stage.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Export of Goods Control Orders

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why Her Majesty's Customs and Excise is no longer offering compounding in cases arising under the Export of Goods Control Orders 1974 to 1981 et al; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Customs and Excise has not changed its policy and does offer to compound proceedings in appropriate cases. That policy was set out in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on 26 April 1984 at column *542*.

EC Commission (Staff)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons were employed by the European Economic Community Commission on the most recent date for which figures are available; what was the total cost of administering the Commission on the same date; and what were the comparable figures, respectively, five and 10 years previously.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let my hon. Friend have a repy as soon as possible.

EC Commission (Expenditure)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement outlining the procedures for controlling and supervising the spending of public funds by the Common Market Commission.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The community budgetary authority, the Council and Parliament, are responsible, under the treaty, for the authorisation of funds through the annual budgetary procedure. The Court of Auditors is responsible for the audit of the Community's accounts, including those of the Commission, and reports annually on them.

Bad Debt Relief

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he proposes to provide for bad debt relief in the value added tax system, as recommended in the "Burdens on Business" report.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Chancellor announced in his Budget statement an extension of the existing arrangements for VAT. Legislative provision is included in clause 31 of the current Finance Bill. The extended relief is to be available on the coming into force, early next year, of the provisions of the Insolvency Bill, where the administrator or administrative receiver certifies that the debtor's assets are insufficient to cover the payment of any dividend to unsecured creditors. Relief is also to be available where the debtor agrees a voluntary scheme or enters into a formal deed of arrangement with his creditors.

Black Economy

Mr. Eggar asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he proposes to take to reduce the black economy in the construction industry and other industries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to my remarks in the Adjournment debate on 25 January, at columns 1305-1312. Both Revenue Departments continue to keep the methods used to counter tax evasion in the black economy in the construction and other industries under careful review.

Mr. Eggar asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the construction industry regarding the black economy in building work and the effect of competition within the industry of the value added tax exemption limit for small businesses; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Hayhoe: A total of 146 representations have been identified in the past year. They all in some way alluded to the black economy in the construction industry and a few sought to have the level of the VAT registration threshold reduced. The present VAT threshold of £19,500 excludes from registration many small traders in the construction industry, and there is no firm evidence to suggest that there is a significant number of businesses which are properly registrable but have failed to notify their liability.

Mr. Eggar asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated number of traders in the construction industry who are failing to comply with their legal obligation to be registered for value added tax with Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; and whether there is any evidence that the number of such traders is increasing.

Mr. Hayhoe: There are no estimated figures available for the number of traders who fail to notify their liability to be registered for VAT. In a sample exercise, based on information supplied by the industry, Customs and Excise was unable to establish that out of 132 cases a single trader had failed to comply with his legal obligation.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Eggar asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what penalties are imposed by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise upon a trader whose taxable turnover for value added tax purposes is in excess of the prevailing exemption limit for small businesses and who breaks the law by failing to notify Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Mr. Hayhoe: The maximum penalty, on summary conviction, for failing to notify a liability for VAT registration is £1,000 or, if greater, three times the amount of the tax evaded by the failure.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to reintroduce the scheme for deferred value added tax and duty for goods imported by registered traders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Arrangements are available under which importers, once approved, may defer payment of duty and value added tax chargeable at importation until the 15th of the following month. However, the hon. Member may have in mind the former postponed accounting system for VAT alone. As indicated in my answer to my hon. Friend

the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 14 February, at column *290*, we would revert to this system if other member states agreed to the Commission's proposals, in the draft 14th directive on VAT, to adopt it throughout the Community.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if any discussions are taking place within the European Economic Community as to the introduction of a standard system for the removal of value added tax on goods coming into a European Economic Community country on a sale-or-return basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Yes. Discussions are taking place on a draft 17th VAT directive, which proposes that temporary imports on approval of certain categories of goods, including made-up articles of fur, precious stones, carpets and articles of jewellery, should be relieved of VAT.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the types and volume of goods coming into the United Kingdom on a sale-or-return basis, on which value added tax has to be paid.

Mr. Hayhoe: Importers are not required to identify sale-or-return goods separately, and I regret therefore that no information of the kind requested is collected.

Construction Industry (Taxation)

Mr. Eggar asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the increase in revenue to the Exchequer of small businesses in the construction industry being required to register for value added tax when their taxable turnover exceeds £9,750 per annum.

Mr. Hayhoe: In the absence of reliable information on businesses in the construction industry that are currently not required to register for value added tax, I regret that it is not possible to provide a meaningful estimate.

Mr. Eggar asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the loss of revenue to the Exchequer from the construction industry of the value added tax exemption limit for small businesses being raised to *(a)* £50,000 and *(b)* £100,000.

Mr. Hayhoe: Such large changes make any prediction of the likely revenue effects very difficult and subject to considerable uncertainty. I regret therefore that a reliable estimate of the revenue loss cannot be given.

Jewellery Trade (Free Port)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to set up in the United Kingdom a free port for the jewellery trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Experimental free zones have already been designated at Belfast international airport, Birmingham international airport, Cardiff, Liverpool, Prestwick international airport and Southampton. Members of the jewellery trade may apply to become free zone traders.

THE ARTS

Castle Howard

Mr. Faulds asked the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State answering in respect of the Arts what arrangements the Minister for the Arts is making to seek to save the art treasures in Castle Howard; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No formal approach has yet been made to the Government concerning works of art at Castle Howard.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Servants (Reinstatement)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister for the Civil Service what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards reinstatement in the British Civil Service of former British civil servants who have taken up posts in the European Economic Community Commission and who have subsequently been made redundant by that organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Community terms of service common to all its institutions do not recognise any form of secondment from national civil services for permanent staff; officers must therefore resign from the United Kingdom Civil Service on taking up an appointment with the Communities. It is important to promote full United Kingdom representation in the European Communities; individuals are encouraged to apply for advertised vacancies as part of their career development and Departments have discretion to offer a guarantee of reinstatement.

Officers given the guarantee of reinstatement have an absolute right of return to their substantive grade for the first five years after departure from the United Kingdom Civil Service. Thereafter, until the 55th birthday the right of return is retained but is not absolute. The parent Department, and the Cabinet Office (MPO) on behalf of the service in general, undertake to use their best endeavours to find an officer a post in his substantive grade. Where a post cannot be found, the officer is retired prematurely on grounds of redundancy.

An officer who has been absent for more than five years and is aged 55 or over has no right of return, but may be reinstated in accordance with normal procedure.

DEFENCE

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 3 May, *Official Report*, column 259, concerning chemical weapons, on what evidence the Minister of State based his statement that United States moves towards modernisation would underline to the Russians the benefits of reaching early agreement on a total ban; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The statement was based on a reasonable assessment.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the measures taken by Warsaw pact countries to modernise their chemical weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 18 of annex A to the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985.

Stainmore (Training Land)

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the starting price per acre he offered for land for dry training at Stainmore; and what is he currently offering.

Mr. Lee: The Property Services Agency, as our agents has made no offer for the Land at Stainmore, pending the outcome of the notification to the local authority to use the land for training.

IBM

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many copies of the letter from IBM of 22 December 1983 regarding the movement of advanced IBM machines within the United Kingdom his Department has received; and how many complaints relating to the letter, or similar letters he has received.

Mr. Butler: The letter from IBM was not addressed to the Ministry of Defence. No complaints relating to the letter, or similar letters, have been received.

Warship Contracts

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he makes of the balance of consideration between competitive tendering and social policy when placing warship contracts.

Mr. Lee: Our policy is to place warship contracts, wherever practicable, by competitive tendering. The primary considerations in evaluating tenders are costs and performance, but account can also be taken of other relevant factors.

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards privatised British warship yards competing for types of work currently carried out in British naval dockyards.

Mr. Lee: The Royal dockyards currently carry out the bulk of the Royal Navy's warship refitting requirements. In their defence open government documents, entitled "The future of the Royal Dockyards", published on 17 April, the Government, in setting out the options for the future management of the dockyards, expressed their intention to open up more warship refit work to competition in future. It would be up to the privatised British warship yards to decide whether they were interested in bidding for such work. For their part, the Government would seek to enourage as wide a competition as possible from suitable firms.

Dockyard Apprentices

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what action he is taking to resolve the problem of apprentices within the Devonport apprentice training centre not being given on-the-job training in Her Majesty's dockyard, Devonport;

(2) if he will announce the numbers of apprentices to be taken on at Her Majesty's dockyard, Devonport.

Mr. Lee: These matters are currently the subject of discussion between management and trades unions at Devonport dockyard.

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to utilise the Devonport apprentice training centre for the training of young people in addition to those apprentices in training for work at Her Majesty's dockyard, Devonport.

Mr. Lee: There are no plans to utilise the apprentice training centre at Devonport dockyard for the training of any young people other than Ministry of Defence apprentices in the immediate future because of the continuing refusal by the trades unions there to support the introduction of a youth training scheme.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Metallic Marker Pens

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has over the use in schools in England of metallic marker pens with gold and silver lettering that contain xylene/xylol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no information as to the extent of the use of such pens in schools.

Science and Engineering Graduates

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what effect the reductions in University Grants Committee grants to some universities in 1981 has had on the output of graduates in science and engineering.

Sir Keith Joseph: The table gives the actual output of first degree science and engineering home graduates (university and CNAA) in Great Britain for 1981-82 and 1982-83, and the Government's output projections for 1983-84 to 1989-90.

Output of First Degree Home Graduates (University and CNAA) in Great Britain, in science and engineering

	(thousands)
Actuals	
1981-82	31·1
1982-83	32·8
Projections	
1983-84	35·3
1984-85	35·4
1985-86	35·4
1986-87	35·7
1987-88	36·1
1988-89	36·7
1989-90	36·9

Notes:
(1) The figures are based on statistics obtained from the universities statistical record (USR) and CNAA. Figures for the numbers awarded CNAA first degrees are estimates.
(2) The projections include graduates from the Government's information technology in higher education initiative (announced in 1982) but do not take account of the engineering and technology programme announced in March 1985.
(3) Science includes biological sciences, physical sciences, mathematics, computer science, agriculture and veterinary science.

School Meals Service

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the implications of the Green Paper on social security for the school meals service.

Mr. Dunn: The Government's proposals on entitlement to remission of the charge for a school meal are set out in volume 1 paragraph 8.12 and volume 2 paragraph 4.51 of the Green Paper.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average cost to pupils of school meals in primary and secondary schools; which are the cheapest local authorities and the dearest in each sector; and how much they charge.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 17 May at column *244*.

Teachers (Qualifications)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many and what percentage of teachers working with integrated classes hold a specialist qualification; how many and what percentage have received in-service training since the implementation of the Education Act 1981; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Some of the information requested by the hon. Member is not collected centrally. The remainder is contained in my answer of 3 April 1985 to the hon. Member at columns *617-18*.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers teaching in special schools had a specialist qualification at the latest date for which figures are available; and what proportion of the special school teaching force this represents.

Mr. Dunn: In England, in January 1984, there were 5,339 full-time and part-time teachers in maintained and non-maintained special schools holding one or more specialist qualifications; this represents around a third of the special school qualified teaching force.

School Rolls

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the percentage by which school rolls have fallen in *(a)* mainstream schools, *(b)* all special schools and *(c)* special schools for ESN(M) and ESN(S) pupils for those of compulsory school age in the period (i) 1972 to 1984 and (ii) 1981 to 1984.

Mr. Dunn: The number of pupils of compulsory school age in maintained primary and secondary schools in England has fallen by 10 per cent. both between 1972 and 1984 and between 1981 and 1984. In maintained and non-maintained special schools, the number of pupils of compulsory school age has fallen by 5 per cent. between 1972 and 1984 and by 9 per cent. between 1981 and 1984. Equivalent information for special schools for ESN(M) and ESN(S) pupils is not available.

Children (Special Educational Needs)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* the number and proportion of children with special needs who *(a)* are awaiting the completion of their statement and *(b)* have had a statement made as to their needs; and what information he has as to the time taken between identification of a child with special educational needs and the completion of the statement process.

Mr. Dunn: No information is collected centrally on the number of children with special needs who are awaiting the completion of their statements or on the average duration of the waiting period. There were 166,000 children in maintained primary and secondary schools and maintained and non-maintained special schools in England in 1984 with statements of special education needs.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to *(a)* the number and proportion of children identified as having special educational needs currently being educated in (i) special and (ii) maintained schools and *(b)* the variation in these figures between local education authorities.

Mr. Dunn: The number and proportion of children with statements of special educational needs being educated in maintained primary, middle and secondary schools and maintained and non-maintained special schools in each LEA in England in January 1984, the latest date for which information is available, are as follows:

LEA	*Number of pupils with statements in Special schools*	*Number of pupils with statements in Primary Middle and Secondary Schools*	*All pupils with statements*	*Percentage of pupils with statements in Special schools*	*Percentage of pupils with statements in Maintained schools*
Barking	297	26	323	92·0	8·0
Barnet	445	67	512	86·9	13·1
Bexley	377	74	451	83·6	16·4
Brent	545	177	722	75·5	24·5
Bromley	571	222	793	72·0	28·0
Croydon	652	287	939	69·4	30·6
Ealing	575	302	877	65·6	34·4
Enfield	500	33	533	93·8	6·2
Haringey	438	88	526	83·3	16·7
Harrow	252	75	327	77·1	22·9
Havering	459	145	604	76·0	24·0
Hillingdon	568	198	766	74·2	25·8
Hounslow	636	155	791	80·4	19·6
Kingston upon Thames	276	50	326	84·7	15·3
Merton	312	36	348	89·7	10·3
Newham	619	128	747	82·9	17·1
Redbridge	485	36	521	93·1	6·9

LEA	Number of pupils with statements in Special schools	Number of pupils with statements in Primary Middle and Secondary Schools	All pupils with statements	Percentage of pupils with statements in Special schools	Percentage of pupils with statements in Maintained schools
Richmond upon Thames	224	46	270	83·0	17·0
Sutton	312	38	350	89·1	10·9
Waltham Forest	886	261	1,147	77·2	22·8
Inner London	7,720	3,657	11,377	67·9	32·1
Birmingham	3,402	406	1,808	89·3	10·7
Coventry	1,072	222	1,294	82·8	17·2
Dudley	639	204	843	75·8	24·2
Sandwell	913	215	1,128	80·9	19·1
Solihull	450	96	546	82·4	17·6
Walsall	744	94	838	88·8	11·2
Wolverhampton	640	165	805	79·5	20·5
Knowsley	666	89	755	88·2	11·8
Liverpool	1,929	1,105	3,034	63·6	36·4
St Helens	535	69	604	88·6	11·4
Sefton	708	157	865	81·8	18·2
Wirral	921	232	1,153	79·9	20·1
Bolton	604	115	719	84·0	16·0
Bury	321	56	377	85·1	16·9
Manchester	2·0007	346	2,353	85·3	14·7
Oldham	735	145	880	83·5	16·5
Rochdale	584	56	640	91·3	8·8
Salford	984	56	1,040	94·6	5·4
Stockport	802	139	941	85·2	14·8
Tameside	392	175	567	69·1	30·9
Trafford	421	243	664	63·4	36·6
Wigan	796	36	832	95·7	4·3
Barnsley	399	19	418	95·5	4·5
Doncaster	875	73	948	92·3	7·7
Rotherham	627	445	1,072	58·5	41·5
Sheffield	1,548	294	1,842	84·0	16·0
Bradford	1,456	358	1,814	80·3	19·7
Calderdale	305	46	351	86·9	13·1
Kirklees	749	132	881	85·0	15·0
Leeds	2,322	600	2,922	79·5	20·5
Wakefield	873	8	881	99·1	0·9
Gateshead	557	145	702	79·3	20·7
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,086	56	1,142	95·1	4·9
North Tyneside	579	59	638	90·8	9·2
South Tyneside	332	118	450	73·8	26·2
Sunderland	814	298	1,112	73·2	26·8
Isles of Scilly		2	2	·0	100·0
Avon	2,346	3,863	6,209	37·8	62·2
Bedfordshire	1,184	591	1,775	66·7	33·3
Berkshire	1,971	1,180	3,151	62·6	37·4
Buckinghamshire	1,877	825	2,702	69·5	30·5
Cambridgeshire	1,430	1,487	2,917	49·0	51·0
Cheshire	1,952	1,745	3,697	52·8	47·2
Cleveland	2,031	546	2,577	78·8	21·2
Cornwall	288	807	1,095	26·3	73·7
Cumbria	679	611	1,290	52·6	47·4
Derbyshire	2,044	1,083	3,127	65·4	34·6
Devon	2,215	987	3,202	69·2	30·8
Dorset	1,281	179	1,460	87·7	12·3
Durham	1,219	294	1,513	80·6	19·4
East Sussex	1,851	285	2,136	86·7	13·3
Essex	3,525	309	3,834	91·9	8·1
Gloucestershire	1,404	379	1,783	78·7	21·3
Hampshire	4,241	967	5,208	81·4	18·6
Hereford and Worcester	1,475	1,832	3,307	44·6	55·4
Hertfordshire	2,754	1,037	3,791	72·6	27·4
Humberside	1,724	1,340	3,064	56·3	43·7
Isle of Wight	311	169	480	64·8	35·2
Kent	3,885	1,120	5,005	77·6	22·4
Lancashire	4,021	1,117	5,138	78·3	21·7
Leicestershire	1,337	1,871	3,208	41·7	58·3

LEA	Number of pupils with statements in Special schools	Number of pupils with statements in Primary Middle and Secondary Schools	All pupils with statements	Percentage of pupils with statements in Special schools	Percentage of pupils with statements in Maintained schools
Lincolnshire	1,262	891	2,153	58·6	41·4
Norfolk	1,020	791	1,811	56·3	43·7
North Yorkshire	1,394	252	1,646	84·7	15·3
Northamptonshire	1,509	512	2,021	74·7	25·3
Northumberland	731	285	1,016	71·9	28·1
Nottinghamshire	2,491	157	2,648	94·1	5·9
Oxfordshire	1,151	2,611	3,762	30·6	69·4
Shropshire	813	520	1,333	61·0	39·0
Somerset	925	511	1,436	64·4	35·6
Staffordshire	2,359	880	3,239	72·8	27·2
Suffolk	850	794	1,644	51·7	48·3
Surrey	3,079	370	3,449	89·3	10·7
Warwickshire	1,536	227	1,763	87·1	12·9
West Sussex	1,284	245	1,529	84·0	16·0
Wiltshire	821	1,262	2,083	39·4	60·6
ENGLAND	118,206	48,107	166,313	71·1	28·9

University Grants

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the staffing implications for the University Grants Committee of its selective policy in the allocation of university grants.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have received no specific representations on this point. The University Grants Committee in discussing with the Department its staffing requirements in relation to its future programme of work. As I announced to the House on 21 May, at column 861, the Government have accepted a recommendation of the Jarratt report to review the role, structure and staffing of the UGC.

Teacher Training

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much importance he attaches to church foundations in the provision of initial teacher training.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend recognises the important contribution which denominational colleges have made to the provision of initial teacher training. As he has previously made clear, however, he cannot commit himself to the maintenance of a particular level of training places for such colleges, any more than he can for other teacher training institutions.

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take action to ensure that initial teacher education continues to be provided in Plymouth, in view of the recommendations made by the secretariat of the national advisory board for public sector higher education.

Mr. Dunn: Proposals for the distribution of intakes to initial teacher training between public sector institutions in England are being considered by the national advisory body for public sector higher education. I cannot anticipate what advice the NAB will submit but I can assure my hon. Friend that in reaching decisions my right hon. Friend will give careful consideration to the representations that have been made to him concerning the future location of initial teacher training.

Dental Hospitals and Schools

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the intake at all dental hospitals and schools within England and Wales during each of the last five years to date, giving figures for each year for each institution to date.

Sir Keith Joseph: The total intake to pre-clinical dental courses in England and Wales during each of the last five years was as follows:

Intake of full-time home and overseas students

During year	Numbers
1979-80	781
1980-81	792
1981-82	791
1982-83	798
1983-84	768
1984-85	*741

* Provisional.

Figures for intakes to individual institutions are not readily available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the estimated cost of redeveloping dental hospitals and schools in England and Wales, giving the figures in each case.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am not aware of any current redevelopment plans for dental schools in England and Wales. Dental hospitals are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Public Expenditure Survey

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has yet received the advice of the advisory board for the research councils on the public expenditure survey for 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes. I received the board's advice in April and am publishing it today. Copies are available in the Library. This advice will be considered carefully in discussions on the 1985 public expenditure survey, and I shall inform the board of my conclusions in due course.

Departmental Cash Limits

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what will be the revised 1985-86 cash limits in his Department's vote to cover the increased provision of additional places in engineering and technology in higher education.

Sir Keith Joseph: As I announced on 19 March at columns 482-84, the Government are to mount a £43 million programme over the next three years for the provision of additional places for students in higher education to study engineering and technology.

I subsequently announced on 3 April at columns 618-20 details of the institutions participating in phase 1 of the programme in 1985-86. The current estimate of cost of phases 1 and 2 in 1985-86 is £10 million, of which £3 million will be met from within the resources announced for the University Grants Committee; the remaining £7 million will be met from within the existing resources of programmes other than education. A list of the revised cash limits resulting from the changes is shown in the following table. Parliamentary approval for the changes in voted expenditure will be sought through Revised or Supplementary Estimates as appropriate.

There is no net effect on public expenditure.

£'000

Class	Vote	Accounting department	Description of expenditure	Current cash limit	Increase Decrease	Revised cash limit
X	2	Department of Education & Science	Student awards, etc.	*695,768	+195	*695,963
X	3	Department of Education & Science	Universities, etc.	1,506,144	+6,377	1,512,521
X	8	Department of Education & Science	Science and engineering research council	297,960	+428	298,388
IV	5	Department of Energy	Research and development and industrial support	290,174	−500	289,674
IV	6	Department of Trade & Industry	Scientific and technological assistance	381,483	−2,500	378,983
XV	3	Industrial Department for Scotland	Regional and general industrial support, Scotland	132,802	†1,200	131,602

* Class X vote 2 is not subject to a cash limit.

† Of this reduction £1 million relates to the engineering and technology programme; the remaining £200,000 relates to expected increased receipts from the ERDF in respect of grants to enterprise trusts.

In addition to items listed, a reduction of £500,000 was made by the Welsh Office in the Main Estimate for class XVI, vote 1 (the Welsh block vote covering roads, transport, housing, education etc.) in respect of the transfer of funds for this programme; no revision of the cash limit is therefore required.

There is also a contribution from the Department of Employment (£2,500,000) from non-voted expenditure. It represents part of a public expenditure saving from deferring implementation of an increase in maternity pay from 90 per cent. to 100 per cent. of salary. There will therefore be no change to a DE vote and no revised estimate.

PRIME MINISTER

GCHQ Cheltenham

Q90. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what proportion of the work of Government communications headquarters is subcontracted to private companies or ex-employees.

The Prime Minister: It is not our practice to give details of the operations of intelligence and security agencies.

Council House Sales

Q117. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Prime Minister what is the number of council houses purchased under the right-to-buy legislation since the enactment of the Housing Act 1980.

The Prime Minister: By the end of 1984, 527,485 homes had been bought under the right-to-buy legislation by tenants of local authorities and new towns in Great Britain. This figure excludes other homes which have been bought under voluntary sale schemes. If those are included, the number rises to about 820,000.

Engagements

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

Dr. Mawhinney asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

Mr. Adley asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 13 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall be attending a banquet given by President de la Madrid of Mexico.

Pay Review Bodies (Payments to Members)

Mr. Dobson asked the Prime Minister what fees, honoraria or expenses are paid to each or any member of the doctors and dentists, nurses, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine and armed forces pay review bodies.

The Prime Minister: No payments are made to any of the members of these review bodies other than reimbursement for travel and subsistence expenditure which they may claim under normal public service regulations.

Mr. Idris Pearce

Mr. Dobson asked the Prime Minister whether the appointment of Mr. Idris Pearce to the National Health Service management board is within the rules of the Civil Service Commissioners.

The Prime Minister: Yes. Mr. Pearce's appointment as a part-time adviser to the management board comes under article 1(2)(*d*) of the Civil Service Order in Council 1982.

EC (Budgetary Controls)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if the strict budgetary controls agreed at the Fontainebleau Council were designed to apply to the Common Market Commission; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The conclusions on budget discipline adopted by the Council on 4 December are binding on the Council. The Commission last year specifically endorsed those parts of the budget discipline text that apply to it.

ENVIRONMENT

Norman Shaw South (Taps)

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will arrange for a drinking water tap to be provided in the toilet in the corridor leading to office GO1 in Norman Shaw South building.

Sir George Young: Yes, a tap will be installed in the corridor outside the toilet during the coming summer recess.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will arrange for the temperature of the water from the hot taps in toilets in Norman Shaw South to be substantially reduced.

Sir George Young: The thermostat which controls the temperature of the hot water is set at 60 C. This ensures that the temperature of the water at the furthest tap does not fall below 55C, which is the highest temperature at which legionella bacteria can breed. I am not prepared to authorise a temperature reduction which could create a health hazard.

Board and Lodging Payments

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implications of the new regulations on board and lodging accommodation payments for the rights of supplementary benefit claimants living temporarily in such accommodation to register on the waiting lists for local authority housing; and whether he has considered issuing a circular on the subject to housing authorities.

Sir George Young: It is too early to say what effect, if any, the new regulations on board and lodgings will have on persons registering on the waiting lists for local authority housing. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, is considering whether further steps are needed to encourage local authorities to concentrate their provision of houses on those in greatest need and in this context the effects of the regulations will be carefully monitored.

Fire (Leyton)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he plans any investigations of the implications of the fire in Clifford Hicks Tower, Oliver Close, Leyton, on 24 May for the structural integrity of high rise tower blocks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gow: The Building Research Establishment (BRE) is carrying out a programme of investigations of buildings constructed using large panel systems, including the Wates system used at Clifford Hicks Tower. The programme includes investigation of the stability of such buildings under fire loads. The BRE has consulted the fire officers who attended the fire at Clifford Hicks Tower on 24 May. I am pleased to say that no-one was injured. The fire did not cause any severe heating of the concrete panels and the BRE sees no advantage in investigation of this particular incident.

North-West

Mr. Jim Callaghan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department is taking to reduce the existence of large areas of industrial dereliction in the north-west.

Mr. Macfarlane: My Department is funding through derelict land grant (which is payable at the rate of 100 per cent. to local authorities in most of the north-west) a large number of reclamation schemes designed both to return derelict land to beneficial use and to improve the general environment. In 1985-86, £25·1 million has been allocated for expenditure by local authorities in the north-west. In addition, grants will be made available to the private sector for land reclamation schemes.

Between 1974 and 1982 over 4,200 hectares of derelict land were restored in the north-west, more than in any other region of England, though the task remains a large one.

Statutory Blight Provisions

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a report analysing the reasons for and against the bringing of oil and gas operations, appraisal and production, under the statutory blight provisions and the payment of compensation for off-site depreciation in value.

Mr. Macfarlane: As my hon. Friend has now written to me on this subject, I will write to him in answer to the detailed points he raises as soon as possible.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) which individual members of the Greater London concil and metropolitan county councils have accepted membership of preparatory committees of successor authorities;

(2) which individual members of the Greater London council have been approached with a view to becoming members of preparatory committees of successor authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not know.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to maintain a party political balance on the preparatory committees of successor authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave: This will be a matter for the authorities concerned to decide.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what control he will exercise over the expenses of preparatory committees of successor authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave: None.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish details in the *Official Report* of the members of shadow preparatory committees of successor authorities;

(2) if he will list the shadow preparatory committees of successor authorities already set up under clause 93 of the Local Government Bill.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proportion of costs associated with the abolition of the Greater London council will fall directly on London ratepayers; and what proportion will fall on national taxpayers;

(2) what are the transitional costs and savings which he expects will be incurred over the first and subsequent five years after the proposed abolition of the Greater London council in respect of the rearrangement of the computer systems of successor authorities;

(3) what are the transitional costs and savings which he expects will be incurred over the first and subsequent five years after the proposed abolition of the Greater London council in respect of transitional administrative arrangements.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have nothing to add to the estimates in the answer my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) on 30 November 1984 at column *611*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which individual authorities have sought from his Department information secured under section 5 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department forwards to each London borough council and metropolitan district council any information relevant to them which the Secretary of State obtains under section 5 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce further names of shadow chairmen of the residuary bodies.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Shortly.

Local Government (Grant Penalties)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to disregard transitional costs incurred by London authorities for the purpose of assessing grant penalties in 1985-86.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend is considering the representations to that effect which he has received.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has had from the Health and Safety Executive regarding the first report of the Hazardous Waste Inspectorate.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department received some initial comments from the Health and Safety Executive prior to the publication of the Hazardous Waste Inspectorate's report.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Health and Safety Executive and its inspectorates will be present at the meeting planned between his Department and local authority associations regarding the disposal of hazardous waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: Government representation at the meeting we propose to hold with the local authority associations has not yet been decided.

Housing Corporation (Corporate Plan)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the Housing Corporation's corporate plan.

Mr. Gow: The Housing Corporation's first corporate plan for England and Wales, prepared as part of the Government's financial management initiative, was published on Tuesday 11 June.

The plan reviews the achievements of the corporation's programme of investment in housing association projects, sets out its objectives and proposes an investment strategy for its future programme. It also outlines the corporation's administrative responsibilities and operating costs, and lists its corporate targets. Of the options for the level of public and private investment by the corporation, the board's preferred option is for a substantial increase over the next four years, for example from gross expenditure in England of £685 million in the present year to £1,144 million in 1989/90. The plan must be considered against the background of the continued need for restraint on public expenditure but my right hon. Friends and I have taken note of the information set out in the plan, which will be taken into account in the forthcoming public expenditure survey.

The Government aim to direct the resources available for housing where they are most needed. We pay tribute to the important contribution of the voluntary housing movement particularly in meeting the needs of the elderly, handicapped and others, such as single parent families, who face special difficulties, and to its role in developing innovative schemes for low-cost home-ownership. The publication of this corporate plan is an opportunity to pay tribute to the corporation and to the voluntary housing movement in England and Wales for their success and resourcefulness.

Housing Defects Act 1984

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the booklet explaining the assistance provided by the Housing Defects Act 1984 will be published.

Mr. Gow: A booklet, which gives details of assistance provided by the Housing Defects Act for private owners

of certain types of prefabricated reinforced concrete houses and flats designated under the Act is being published today. The Department is writing today to local authorities in England sending copies of the booklet and asking them to forward copies to all private owners of homes of the designated types in their area. I understand that the Welsh Office is taking similar action in Wales. A copy of the booklet has been placed in the Library.

Council House Sales

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take concerning delays being experienced by tenants in Southwark in being sent draft legal documents in connection with the purchase of their council houses.

Mr. Gow: My Department has taken up with the London borough of Southwark complaints made by right-to-buy purchasers, in particular those that result from the council's policy of referring all prospective sales to members for approval before legal documents are dispatched. This can lead to unnecessary delays of over three months. Southwark council's attention has been drawn to the Secretary of State's powers and responsibilities under section 23 of the Housing Act 1980 and warned of the possibility of intervention should its procedures continue to cause unnecessary delay. My Department is monitoring the position very closely.

Outturn Expenditure

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the outturn amount of expenditure for 1983-84 and 1984-85 in each of the inner city and urban programme areas of inner city programme expenditure and distinguishing in each case between capital and revenue and voluntary and statutory sectors.

Mr. Kenneth Baker [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 June 1985, c. *358*]: Outturn information by authority is not yet available for 1984-85. Outturn figures do not distinguish between spending on statutory, as opposed to voluntary sector, projects. The latest outturns on which grant may be paid for partnership or programme expenditure in 1983-84 are as follows (all £ million to one decimal place):

Partnerships	*Capital*	*Revenue*
Birmingham	16·2	8·0
Hackney	8·2	4·3
Islington	5·8	4·1
Lambeth	4·8	6·1
Liverpool	14·6	10·4
Manchester/Salford	16·2	7·3
Newcastle/Gateshead	15·8	5·3
Docklands	3·2	1·6
Programmes		
Blackburn	1·5	0·1
Bolton	3·5	0·9
Bradford	3·2	2·7
Brent	0·9	0·5
Coventry	1·4	0·3
Hammersmith and Fulham	2·9	2·7
Kingston upon Hull	4·5	0·8
Knowsley	0·8	0·2
Leeds	3·2	1·4
Leicester	4·2	2·3
Middlesbrough	4·4	1·2
Nottingham	3·6	1·8
Oldham	3·8	0·6
Rochdale	1·8	0·3
Sandwell	2·9	0·2
Sheffield	2·6	1·9
Sunderland	2·9	0·6
Tower Hamlets	1·1	0·2
North Tyneside	2·7	0·7
South Tyneside	3·5	0·8
Wandsworth	1·0	0·7
Wirral	2·9	0·6
Wolverhampton	4·5	1·3

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veterinary Investigation Services

Mr. Steel asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement concerning the main aspects of the administration of the veterinary investigation services in England and Wales.

Mr. Jopling: We have accepted in general terms the principal recommendations of two major reviews bearing on the administration and other features of the veterinary investigation service as stated previously in my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) on 13 November 1984 on Professor Bell's report of a study of ADAS and in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) on 15 April 1985 on an efficiency study of the veterinary investigation service. Copies of these reports are in the Library of the House.

European Community (Food Exports)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has now received details of the amount of food and wine sent from the European Economic Community to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, respectively, in 1984; and if he will publish details of such exports.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is contained in the following table.

European Community Exports of the Main Agricultural Commodities in 1984

	To the Soviet Union	*To Eastern Europe‡ (excluding Soviet Union)*
	000 tonnes	*000 tonnes*
Wheat	4,937	1,631
Barley	70	65
Wheat flour	187	*
Rice	*	8
Malt	79	*
Wholemilk powder	5	1
Skimmed milk powder	*	*
Condensed milk	*	*
Butter and butteroil	85	*
Beef and veal	75	57
Pigmeat	*	2
Poultrymeat	*	6
Sugar, total (white equivalent)†	589	1
of which refined sugar	452	1
Wine	n/a	n/a

Source: EUROSTAT.
* less than 500 tonnes.

† includes raw sugar converted to white sugar equivalent: 1 tonne raw sugar = ·92 tonnes white sugar.
‡ German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania.
n a = not available.

Grain Stores and Silos

Mr. Lyell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the effect on competition in the grain trade of the grants made to farmers' co-operatives for the construction of grain stores and silos; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Representatives of private merchanting interests have from time to time expressed the view that grants to cereal co-operatives cause unfair competition and are unnecessary because they are able to provide all the facilities that are required at no public cost.

I believe that grant-aid to cereal co-operatives has encouraged farmers to replace outdated on-farm storage with modern facilities and given them access to more sophisticated drying methods. Nevertheless, I am very aware of the strong views held by private merchants and understand them. Grants to cereal co-operatives have been reduced by two thirds in the last two years and 90 per cent. of the cost of facilities now has to be found by a co-operative's members. Where merchanting groups successfully apply for grant under the EC marketing and processing regulation, 355/77, the percentage of both United Kingdom and EC grant will now be similar to that awarded to co-operatives. Furthermore, a number of co-operatives have employed merchants as marketing agents and the costs incurred by the co-operatives can be grant-aided in certain circumstances. I hope that merchants will recognise that the position is now more balanced than before.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Nicholls asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to receive recommendations for new regulations based on welfare codes from the Farm Animal Welfare Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I understand that the council has consulted many interested organisations about its proposals for new legislation and is now considering the responses. I am unable to say when the council will be ready to put its recommendations to Agriculture Ministers, but we await them with interest.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Sir Peter Mills asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers meeting held in Luxembourg on 11 and 12 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made earlier today in the House.

EMPLOYMENT

Skillcentre, Middlesbrough

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Employment what was the underutilised capacity at the Middlesbrough skillcentre in 1983-84 and 1984-85; and what was the projected underutilised capacity for 1986-87.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In 1983-84 Middlesbrough skillcentre had a capacity of 190 training places, 180 of which were purchased by the training division of the Manpower Services Commission. In 1984-85, after disposing of surplus property, capacity at the centre was 150 places, of which training division purchased 118. In 1985-86 training division will purchase 54 places of the centre's 150-place capacity.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what was the trading income from the Middlesbrough skillcentre in 1983-84 and 1984-85; and what was the projected trading income for 1986-87;

(2) what were the operating costs of the Middlesbrough skillcentre in 1983-84 and 1984-85; and what were the projected operating costs for 1986-87.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No financial information relating to individual skillcentres is available for 1983-84 prior to the establishment of the skillcentre training agency as a trading account. The trading income and operating costs for Middlesbrough skillcentre in 1984-85, excluding any contributions towards regional and head office costs, are £793,000 and £843,000 respectively. In 1985-86 it is forecast that the centres trading income will be £403,000 and its operating costs £626,000. Detailed forecasts about individual skillcentres for 1986-87 will not be prepared until nearer the start of the year.

Open Tech (Exhibition)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to Open Tech to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 24 to 28 June.

Community and Industry Scheme

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a breakdown of the occupancy rates on the community and industry scheme within Yorkshire and Humberside; and if he will give each area's allocation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The latest statistics for the community industry scheme in Yorkshire and Humberside are set out in the table:

Community Industry Area	*Occupancy**	*Allocation*
Barnsley	95	110
Bradford	77	75
Doncaster	145	145
Leeds	132	135
North Humberside	146	145
Rotherham	145	145

Community Industry Area	Occupancy*	Allocation
Sheffield	75	75
South Humberside	108	105
Wakefield	110	110

* At 11 April 1985.

Areas are allowed to fill places above their allocation of places to ensure the 7,000 national filled place target is achieved over the year.

National Carriers, Sheffield (Fire)

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Employment if, in relation to the 14 December fire at the National Carriers warehouse in Sheffield, he will give the grade of the Health and Safety Executive inspector who made the first visit to the site following the fire; whether any firemen were present on site at the time of the first visit; whether any advice was given by the Health and Safety Executive inspector making the visit on the wearing by the firemen of breathing apparatus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The first visit was made by Her Majesty's principal inspector of factories during the fire, when firemen were still active on site. No advice was given by the inspector on the wearing of breathing apparatus by firemen.

We await the Health and Safety Executive's report.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Employment, in relation to the 14 December fire at the National Carriers warehouse in Sheffield, if a log is kept detailing the day-by-day involvement of Health and Safety Executive inspectors investigating the fire; if he will give the date of the first witness statement taken from a fireman by the Health and Safety Executive, the number of Health and Safety Executive inspectors who have worked paid overtime taking witness statements and interviewing firemen and the date on which paid overtime began to be paid and the amount of overtime which has been worked to date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A log is not kept detailing day-by-day involvement of Health and Safety Executive inspectors investigating the fire. The first witness statement taken from a fireman by the Health and Safety Executive is dated 26 April 1985.

The amount of overtime worked by officials in this investigation is a matter for the Health and Safety Executive.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has about the extent to which temporary summer employment was *(a)* available and *(b)* taken up in 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is not available.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people completing youth training schemes in the London borough of Newham *(a)* have found employment within the field they were trained; *(b)* have found employment outside the field they were trained and *(c)* have not been employed since leaving the scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information is not available in the precise form requested. However, information based on a 15 per cent. sample of young people in the Manpower Services Commission's London north-east area who left the youth training scheme between July and September 1984 shows that, at the time of the survey, 38 per cent. of those who responded were in employment related to the training undertaken on the scheme, 30 per cent. were in jobs not directly related to that training and 20 per cent. were unemployed. The remainder were on a full-time course at a college or training centre (4 per cent.), on another youth training scheme (3 per cent.), back at school (1 per cent.) or doing something else (4 per cent.)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many pople have been unemployed for *(a)* between six months and one year, *(b)* between one year and two years and *(c)* over two years in the London borough of Newham.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the library. On 11 April 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, in the East Ham, Plaistow and Stratford jobcentre areas, which correspond closely to the London borough of Newham, 4,005 claimants had been unemployed for between six months and one year, 3,448 for between one year and two years and 4,868 for over two years.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of people aged 18 years or under 18 years who have never had a job since leaving school; and what percentage of young people aged 18 years or under this represents.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 9 May 1985 there were 163,787 unemployed claimants aged 18 or under in Great Britain who had never had a job since leaving school, which represents about 6 per cent. of the estimated population in this age group.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of school leavers aged 18 or under in the London borough of Newham; and what percentage of these have never had a job since leaving school.

Mr. Clark: On 9 May 1985 there were 878 unemployed claimants aged 18 or under in the London borough of Newham who had never had a job since leaving school. An estimate of the corresponding population of this age group who have left school in the relevant academic years is not available.

Noise Levels

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Employment why the Council directive arising from the proposal of the Commission of the European Communities on the subjeect of noise at work, calling for the maximum exposure of 85 dB(A) Leq has not yet come into force; and if he will make a statment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Commission proposal to which the hon. Member refers was formally amended by the Commission itself in July 1984 to take account of the opinion delivered by the European Parliament. In its amended form, the proposal provides for a maximum exposure limit of 90 rather than 85 dB(A) Leq. Discussions based on this amended proposal have

continued between officials of the member states, and the outcome of those discussions is being considered at today's Labour and Social Affairs Council in Luxembourg.

Bank Holidays

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the dates of the Christmas and new year bank holidays in the years 1987 to 1989.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the years 1987-89 certain bank holidays in the Christmas period fall on Saturdays and Sundays. Some of these are automatically transferred to weekdays under the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971. In the other cases it is our intention to declare substitute holidays on weekdays subject to the necessary orders being made by royal proclamation. As a result, the dates of the Christmas and new year bank holidays in 1987-89 will be as set out in the table.

We have considered carefully whether it would be helpful to have all of these substitute holidays falling in the working week between Christmas and the new year, but the banks, the only organisations bound by the arrangements we make, require three working days to meet the needs of their customers during that very busy period.

Many people are uncertain about the status of bank holidays. It is important that they are aware that the majority of employers are free to make their own arrangements (unless they are bound by the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 or by a wages council order or agricultural wages board order). I would encourage employers and employees to negotiate other arrangements if they find the official dates inconvenient.

Christmas and new year bank holidays 1987-89

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland	*In Scotland*
1987	
Thursday 1 January*	Thursday 1 January
Friday 25 December	Friday 2 January
Monday 28 December*	Monday 28 December*
1988	
Friday 1 January*	Friday 1 January
Monday 26 December	Monday 4 January*
Tuesday 27 December	Monday 26 December
	Tuesday 27 December*
1989	
Monday 2 January*	Monday 2 January
Monday 25 December	Tuesday 3 January
Tuesday 26 December	Monday 25 December
	Tuesday 26 December*

* To be declared by royal proclamation.

Wages Councils

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received any further representations from Trades Union Congress affiliated unions regarding the future of wages councils.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 June 1985, c. *407*]: I wish to correct my previous reply, which should have read as follows:

I have to date received a total of 693 responses to our consultative paper on wages councils, including a number from trade unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress.

ENERGY

Alternative Power Sources

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy what organisations involved in the development of alternative power sources in the United Kingdom receive funding directly or indirectly from his Department; and how much each has received since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: Support has been given to the private sector, research institutes, universities and the nationalised industries for work under my Department's programme on the renewable sources of energy. The total number of contracts in place and incurring expenditure between 1979 and the present time is 426.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his assessment as to which alternative source of energy has the greatest potential for development in the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Hunt: It is not possible to pick the single alternative source with the greatest potential for development at the present stage of development. Some technologies, such as passive solar and waste combustion, have been shown to have considerable economic potential now, but others which at present we consider to be in the promising but uncertain category, may eventually show greater potential.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of all United Kingdom power requirements is forecast to be produced from alternative power sources by 1999 and 2009; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Projections of the contribution that aternative energies might make to United Kingdom power requirements by the year 2010 are given in the Department of Energy's proof of evidence for the Sizewell B public inquiry as up to 8 million tonnes of coal equivalent per annum.

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide a breakdown of expenditure on alternative energy resources; and how this compares with figures for the last 10 years.

Mr. David Hunt: Total expenditure by my Department on renewable energy in 1985-86 is forecast to be £14 million. Actual expenditure from 1975-76 to 1984-85 was as follows:

£ million

	1975-76	*1976-77*	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85 Estimate*
Wind				0·3	0·6	0·8	0·9	2·5	2·5	4·8
Wave				1·8	3·0	3·3	4·4	3·1	1·0	0·4
Geothermal aquifers				0·2	1·3	1·7	2·6	1·5	1·8	1·1
Geothermal hot dry rocks	}0·5	}0·3	}1·3	—	—	0·6	5·6	3·0	2·9	4·6
Solar				0·2	1·2	0·9	0·7	1·4	0·9	0·5
Biomass				—	0·1	0·3	0·4	0·7	0·3	0·2
Tide				—	0·6	1·4	0·4	—	—	0·3
ETSU services		0·7	1·2	1·1	1·4	2·2	2·3	2·0	1·9	2·1
TOTAL	*·5	*1·0	*2·5	3·6	8·2	11·2	17·3	14·2	11·3	14·0

* Includes energy conservation Research and Development.

No information available for 1974-75.

Wave Power

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what funding is earmarked in 1985-86 for the development of wave power; and how this compares with each year since 1979;

(2) how much has been spent on developing alternative power sources from *(a)* waves and *(b)* geothermal energy since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: Expenditure by my Department on wave and geothermal energy since 1979-80 was as follows:

	Wave £ million	*Geothermal £ million*
1979-80	3·0	1·3
1980-81	3·3	2·4
1981-82	4·4	8·1
1982-83	3·1	4·5
1983-84	1·0	4·7
*1984-85	0·4	5·7

* Estimate.

My Department's funding on wave energy research in 1985-86 is expected to be approximately £300,000.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to progress made in Norway with a wave power station and its projected operating costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department is in touch with the current Norwegian wave energy work which is based on the installation in 1986 of two different devices, each with a capacity of approximately 350kW.

The Norwegian manufacturers' present estimates for follow-up stations at cliff sites similar to those being used in Norway lie in the range 3-4p/kWh.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the best present estimated cost of a kilowatt-hour of electricity produced by wave power; and how this compares with the best performance of coal-fired power stations.

Mr. David Hunt: Consultants' assessments made for my Department conclude that there is a low probability of wave energy for large-scale power generation in the United Kingdom achieving an energy cost below 8p/kWh.

According to the latest CEGB update of its booklet "Analysis of Generation Costs," the cost of generation from a future coal fired station is just over 4p/kWh.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy when it is anticipated that a wave power prototype will be in place.

Mr. David Hunt: Wave energy is not sufficiently attractive in the United Kingdom at present to justify the funding of a wave energy prototype. However, the Department remains receptive to new ideas which could lead to the major cost reductions required.

Sizewell B

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimate of the cost of the proposed Sizewell B power station.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB in its closing statement to the Sizewell inquiry, confirmed its latest estimate to be £1,147 million at March 1982 prices.

National Energy Managers' Exhibition

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Energy why there is no lighting content in the forthcoming national energy managers' exhibition at the national exhibition centre at Birmingham in November which is being arranged in conjunction with his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: On the contrary, several companies specialising in lighting and lighting control systems have reserved stands at the national energy management exhibition in November.

Nuclear Plants (Safeguards)

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will list those member countries of the European collaborative programme on fast reactors which refuse access to civil nuclear plants to inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency or do not fully comply with Euratom safeguards.

Mr. Goodlad: The nuclear safeguards arrangements covering the European fast breeder collaborative programme were set out in my reply of 1 April 1985 to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas).

The situation regarding access to United Kingdom facilities by safeguards inspectors was set out in my reply of 3 December 1984 to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy. I cannot speak for other countries on specific safeguards matters.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

COCOM

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many officials of his Department are assigned to COCOM.

Mr. Rifkind: Two: the United Kingdom delegate to the Co-ordinating Committee (COCOM) and his assistant, both of whom are members of the staff of Her Majesty's ambassador at Paris. Other members of the diplomatic service based in London attend COCOM meetings in Paris as part of the United Kingdom delegation from time to time, as the need arises.

EC (Staff Redundancies)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers the decision of the Common Market Commission to offer terms of redundancy to its civil servants which amount to sums totalling £250,000 per person; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Discussions of these Commission proposals are at an early stage. The United Kingdom will be working towards a fair and cost-effective scheme which will allow for the entry of Spanish and Portuguese nationals to the Commission, without any overall increase in the Commission's size.

Nuclear Weapons (Conference)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what position Her Majesty's Government are adopting in preparation for the third review conference of the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons with a view to reductions in nuclear weapons.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) to the hon. Member for Meirionnyd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on 10 June, at column 312.

EC (Spain and Portugal)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement about the signature of the Spanish and Portuguese treaty of accession to the European Communities.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The treaty on the accession of Spain and Portugal to the European Communities was signed in Lisbon and Madrid on 12 June. I was the United Kingdom signatory together with our permanent representative to the European Communities.

The Government intend to introduce a Bill on Spanish and Portuguese accession at the beginning of the next parliamentary Session, which will provide the House with an opportunity to examine the treaty of accession before ratification. As soon as a certified copy of the treaty, with the lengthy Act of Accession annexed to it, is available, a copy will be placed in the Library of the House to enable hon. Members to study it. An account of the outcome in the main chapters of the negotiations has been made available meanwhile to hon. Members in the document entitled "Annex to the Statement made by the President-In-Office of the European Council to the European Parliament", which was placed in the Library of the House on 23 April.

I would also draw the attention of hon. Members to a joint Foreign and Commonwealth Office and British Overseas Trade Board booklet called "Basic Facts on Spanish Accession". It gives a summary of the relevant transitional arrangements and is designed to help British exporters to the Spanish and Portuguese markets and was

published on 12 June. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House and in the Vote Office. A companion booklet on Portuguese accession will be available on 22 June and copies will also be placed in the Library of the House.

Before leaving Madrid, I had an exchange of letters with the Spanish Foreign Minister, in which we agreed that our respective positions concerning Gibraltar had not been affected by signature of the accession treaty. I am arranging for copies of the exchange to be placed in the Library of the House.

TRANSPORT

Goods Vehicles (Licensing Appeals)

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to provide a right of appeal against the decision of the licensing authority for those making representations under the Goods' Vehicles (Operators' Licences Qualifications and Fees) Regulations 1984 (S.I., 1984, No. 176); and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I have undertaken to review the working of these regulations after a year in operation. The review is to commence shortly, and if as a result of it there appears to be a need to extend the right of appeal I will consider doing so.

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to introduce a requirement for those wishing to make representations in connection with an appeal to be heard under the Goods' Vehicles (Operators' Licences Qualifications and Fees) Regulations 1984 (S.I., 1984, No. 176) to have a right to be informed when the licensing authority is to hear the appeal; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: If a licensing authority decides to hold an inquiry into an application for a goods vehicle operator's licence, people who have made valid representations are informed of the date. Appeals against the decision of the licensing authority are to the transport tribunal, but representers have no right of appeal and there are no arrangements for them to be informed. In reviewing the operation of the system I will consider whether these arrangements need to be amended.

Manchester Airport (American Airlines)

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action he intends taking on the application by American airlines to operate services to and from Manchester international airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The US Government, with whom any new traffic rights have to be negotiated and agreed, have now expressed an interest in securing access to Manchester airport for US airlines operating scheduled passenger services. In accordance with section 6.31 of the White Paper, "Airports Policy" (Cmnd. 9542), we are now considering with the United Kingdom interests affected, including Manchester airport, the basis on which such traffic rights should be made available to US airlines, including American Airlines, in preparation for a meeting with the US Government very soon.

Crash Barriers (A38)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if, whilst reviewing the criteria for providing crash barriers on the central reservations of dual carriageways, he will as an interim measure place short stretches of crash barriers on the central reservation on black spots on the A38 between Exeter and Plymouth; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if, in view of the level of fatalities on the Plympton bypass on the A38 in the last two months, he will now provide crash barriers on the central reservation of this stretch of road; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if, in view of the fatalities on 8 June on the winding stretch of the A38 between Ivybridge and South Brent, he will now provide crash barriers on the central reservation of this stretch of road; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The special assessment of the provision of safety fences on the A38 between Exeter and Plymouth has been completed. As a result of that, I have agreed to the provision of two additional lengths of safety fences, one between Plympton and Bittaford, and the other between Syon Abbey and Dean Prior. I shall write to my hon. Friend to give him full details of the lengths concerned.

PTAs (Secession)

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the criteria on which district councils will be allowed to secede from passenger transport authorities in respect of railways; whether they will include arrangements to continue support for rail services within that district council's area; and whether he will take into account the effect on the rail network throughout the passenger transport authorities area of any such secession.

Mr. David Mitchell: As we said in our White Paper "Streamlining the Cities" (Cmnd. 9063):

"The Government will be prepared to consider proposals by individual districts to provide separate services . . . But, before any such arrangements are made, the Government will have to be satisfied about the relationship between the district and the PTA in respect of facilities such as rail services which benefit the whole metropolitan area."

"Airports Policy"

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Transport what efforts are being made, following the publication of Cmnd. 9542, "Airports Policy", to liberalise regulations and increase the scope for new services for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Northern Ireland has already benefited from the Government's commitment to greater competition on domestic air services. We are also actively seeking more liberal arrangements for international air services, particularly in Europe, from which it could benefit. In addition, we are already to discuss with airport authorities in Northern Ireland how we can help with their development, including the introduction of new services.

London Underground (Fire)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what dates he received the reports by London Regional Transport and of the London fire brigade into the Oxford Circus fire of 23 November 1984.

Mr. Ridley: London Regional Transport completed a preliminary report in December 1984. The London fire brigade's report was submitted to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services in February 1985. Copies of these reports were received by the Railway Inspectorate in my Department in December 1984 and March 1985, respectively.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 10 June, if he will place copies of the reports into the Oxford Circus fire made by London Regional Transport and by the London fire brigade in the Library.

Mr. Ridley: I am arranging for a summary of the London fire brigade's report to Her Majesty's Chief Inspecting Officer of the Fire Service to be placed in the Library. The report of the LRT panel of inquiry is a preliminary working document, internal to LRT, which addresses some of the immediate operational issues. There are many additional matters arising from the fire which LRT is also considering. It will be publishing a statement on the circumstances of the fire and action being taken to prevent a recurrence. I shall see that this statement is placed in the Library when it is published.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 10 June, if he will make a statement on the recommendations contained in the report by the London fire brigade into the fire at Oxford Circus on 23 November 1984.

Mr. Ridley: The London fire brigade report was concerned with establishing the cause of the fire and does not include any recommendations. Action necessary to prevent a recurrence was agreed at a series of meetings between LRT and the London fire brigade. Implementation of these measures is proceeding and LRT will include a report on them in the statment that it will be publishing.

Light Dues

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the structure of light dues.

Mr. David Mitchell: In September last I invited Arthur Andersen and Co., the consultant accountants, to undertake a wide ranging review of light dues structure. I have now had its report, and copies have been placed in the Library.

The report makes a number of recommendations which, if implemented, would extend liability for dues to categories of vessels that at present are exempt and redistribute the liability within those categories that have borne it hitherto.

These recommendations will be of general concern to the marine community and I propose, therefore, to make the report available for comment to all those bodies that Arthur Andersen and Co. consulted in the course of preparing the report.

Vehicle Excise Licences

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to increase the number of sub-post offices authorised to issue vehicle excise licences.

Mr. Michael Spicer: At a meeting this week I reached agreement with the chairman of the Post Office to extend the vehicle relicensing service by an extra 500 sub-post offices over the next three years. Details of the extension will be worked out with the Post Office in conjunction with my Department, and when the particular outlets have been selected I will notify the hon. Members concerned. I believe that this new extension, taken with the 160 sub-offices added last year, will considerably improve the convenience of the relicensing service, particularly for those living in rural areas.

Other measures designed to improve the arrangements for vehicle licensing are also under consideration, including more stringent checks on MOT certificates presented with licensing applications.

SCOTLAND

Acid Rain

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans the Forestry Commission has for a systematic survey of trees outside its plantations, to examine them for symptoms similar to those of acid rain damage in Holland, France or Germany.

Mr. John MacKay: The Forestry Commission's plantations are widely distributed throughout Great Britain and occur at a wide range of elevations. In view of the good cover thus provided, it is not intended to make a systematic survey of trees outside these areas.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those sites used in the recent Forestry Commission survey of conifers investigated for signs of acid rain damage.

Mr. John MacKay: The sites at which trees were assessed in the 1984 survey for symptoms associated with air pollution are as follows:

Alice Holt, Hampshire
Afan, West Glamorgan
Affric, Highland Region
Bowland, Lancashire
Brechfa, Dyfed
Carron Valley, Central Region
Challock, Kent
Dalton, Cumbria
Dartmoor, Devon
Dean, Gloucestershire
Fife, Fife Region
Glasfynydd, Powys
Grizedale, Cumbria
Hamsterley, Durham
Harwood, Northumberland
Hope, Derbyshire
Inshriach, Highland Region
Kielder, Northumberland
Kilmichael, Strathclyde Region
Newborough Warren, Anglesey
Dolgellau, Gwynedd
Lockerbie, Dumfries and Galloway Region
Peebles, Borders Region
Moray, Grampian Region
Mortimer, Shropshire
New Forest, Hampshire
Newton Stewart, Dumfries & Galloway Region
Nithsdale, Dumfries & Galloway Region
Cleveland, North Yorkshire
Dalby, North Yorkshire
Penicuik, Lothian Region
Rheola, West Glamorgan
Rockingham, Northants
Ruthin, Clwyd

St. Gwynno, Mid Glamorgan
Teindland, Grampian Region
Tair Onen, Mid Glamorgan
Thetford, Norfolk
Tintern, Gwent
Torridge, Devon

Mr. William Macrae

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Highland region about whether police protection was given to Mr. William Macrae of Balvicar drive, Glasgow, following his car accident near Loch Loyne on 6 April until his death at Aberdeen Royal infirmary on 7 April.

Mr. Ancram: As the hon. Member will be aware from the reply he received on 10 June 1985 from my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General for Scotland, the procurator fiscal at Inverness has been conducting an investigation into the circumstances surrounding Mr. Macrae's death. A report from the Northern constabulary was submitted to the procurator fiscal as part of the investigation. The matter is therefore being considered in the normal way, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment at present. The Solicitor-General will, however, write to the hon. Member in due course.

Dental Hospitals and Schools

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the intake at all dental hospitals and schools within Scotland during each of the past five years to date giving figures for each year for each institution to date.

Mr. John MacKay: The intake for each of the dental hospitals and schools within Scotland during the past five years is as follows:

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Dundee	53	51	40	48	50
Edinburgh	46	51	54	56	41
Glasgow	74	74	75	75	70
Scotland	173	176	169	179	161

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated cost of redeveloping Edinburgh dental hospital and school.

Mr. John MacKay: The estimated cost depends upon the nature and scale of the redevelopment proposed. The joint working party of Edinburgh university and Lothian health board, to which I referred in my answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 24 May, at col. *583*, considered four redevelopment options. The total costs of these options which would fall on Edinburgh university and Lothian health board, are as follows:

Options	**Costs (£ million)*	
	Capital	*Recurrent*
New building, enhanced postgraduate facilities	7·845	0·239
New building, typical postgraduate facilities	7·286	0·231
Upgrade existing building and relocate academic accommodation	1·996	(0·009)†
Upgrade and extend existing building and relocate academic accommodation	2·925	0·027

* Costs are based on 1983-84 levels.
† Figures for recurrent expenditure represent additional net costs; the figure in brackets represents net savings.

Primary Postgraduate Certificate in Education

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to approve the guidelines drawn up for primary postgraduate certificate in education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Planning is proceeding on the basis of the broad guidlines drawn up by the working party on primary teacher training in order that revised one-year postgraduate courses may be offered in the 1986-87 academic session. I hope to make a further statement when I have received the report of a working party which is currently considering corresponding matters in relation to secondary teacher training.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Refreshment Department

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal why the Refreshment Department is selling water in bottles whose label includes a competition with a closing date of September 1983.

Mr. Biffen: In response to demand from many Members, the Refreshment Department in 1982-83 ordered stocks of a variety of brands of mineral water. Not all brands proved equally popular, and some stocks have only recently been exhausted. The Department will take account of the actual pattern of demand when re-ordering in future.

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will seek to make it the policy of the Services Committee that goods supplied by the Refreshment Department should not be marked with labels advertising private medical insurance schemes.

Mr. Biffen: No. Any such policy would entail impracticable constraints on the Refreshment Department's commercial suppliers.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Higher Education

11. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to implement the recommendations of the Williams report dealing with higher education in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: I have welcomed this report and its recommendations are now being considered by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland and other interested parties. Implementation is mainly a matter for higher education institutions on both sides of the border.

Council House Sales

12. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the Government's right-to-buy policy for council dwellings.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am glad to say that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive operates a successful voluntary sales scheme which has enabled 26,000 dwellings to be

sold to sitting tenants. So far, no tenants have invoked the provisions of the right-to-buy legislation in Northern Ireland.

Town Gas

13. **Mr. Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many jobs will be lost as a result of the decision to close the town gas industries in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: Approximately 1,000 over the closure period. But this will be offset by higher employment in other fuels, particularly coal and liquid petroleum gas, which are heavily labour-intensive in distribution.

Explosives

14. **Mr. Molyneaux** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he intends to take to halt the movement of explosives into Northern Ireland from the Irish Republic.

Mr. Hurd: The security forces use a variety of measures in border areas, which, among other objectives, are directed to preventing the movement of explosives and munitions. We keep these measures under regular review. It would not be sensible to announce what detailed security measures are or will be taken.

Security

15. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security position in Northern Ireland.

16. **Rev. William McCrea** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest security situation in Northern Ireland.

17. **Mr. Maginnis** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentlemen to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) earlier today.

22. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further steps he is taking to improve cross-border security in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hurd: Because terrorists regularly exploit the existence of the border in their operations, cross-border security co-operation is an essential part of our campaign against terrorism. At present it is on the whole good, but we constantly seek to improve it. It would not be sensible to disclose in detail what action is taken.

Natural Gas

18. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will give further consideration to the revised scheme for piping natural gas put forward by the gas employers, the trade unions and Belfast city council.

Dr. Boyson: The revised scheme has already been very fully considered. It does not provide the basis for a viable gas industry and the Government are therefore unable to support it.

Cross-border Co-operation

19. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what advice he has received from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as to the level and quality of co-operation that he is receiving from the Garda Siochana in the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Hurd: I consult the Chief Constable on a range of security and policing matters. The content of his advice to me is confidential.

Gas Industry

20. **Mr. Hugh Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the cost of providing full compensation to all gas consumers on the closure of the industry.

Dr. Boyson: The cost of the conversion assistance scheme is estimated at £20 million.

24. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the future of the gas industry in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: There is nothing to add to what I have already said on a number of occasions both inside and outside the House.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

21. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the present recruitment rate of Catholics into the Royal Ulster Constabulary; and how that compares with the rates which obtained in 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975 and 1980.

Mr. Scott: The religious denominations of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its reserve have not been recorded since 1970, thus comparative statistics are not available. Nevertheless, I understand that about 12 per cent. of those recruited to the force in 1984 were Catholics.

The RUC is anxious to attract suitably qualified recruits from all parts of the community.

31. **Rev. Ian Paisley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the condition of certain border Royal Ulster Constabulary stations.

Mr. Scott: The provision and maintenance of buildings for the Royal Ulster Constabulary is the responsibility of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, working in conjunction with the Chief Constable. Pressure on accommodation has arisen due to the substantial growth in the size of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in recent years; but, with the support of the Northern Ireland Office, the Police Authority is giving high priority to the provision of new accommodation and the upgrading of existing accommodation. This programme of work will extend to all Royal Ulster Constabulary premises, including rural stations. In excess of £55 million has been earmarked for this purpose over the next three years.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subjects he discussed at his last meeting with the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend meets the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary regularly. Their meetings are confidential and it would not be right for me to disclose their content.

Elections

23. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will report on the security arrangements surrounding the recent local government elections.

Mr. Scott: The police as usual made the arrangements they deemed necessary to ensure the maintenance of law and order during the period up to the district council elections on 15 May and on the day itself. While a number of incidents occured during the period, none significantly affected the poll. I know the House will join me in paying a warm tribute to the security forces in Northern Ireland for their work in preserving the integrity of the electoral system.

25. **Mr. William Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to make for amending the provisions of the Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985.

Mr. Scott: Following the recent Northern Ireland district council elections, the Government are considering whether any such amendment is necessary and, if so, what form it might take.

Constitutional Conference

26. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will consider initiating a round table conference of all political parties in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Britain to discuss the present situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hurd: No.

Dairy Industry

27. **Mr. Nicholson** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made in resolving the problems facing the dairy industry in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: In recognition of the special problems facing the Northern Ireland dairy industry, the consumer subsidy on liquid milk, worth a maximum of £5·5 million, has been renewed for the 1985-86 financial year. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is still in consultation with agricultural colleagues on the problem of allocations of quota to certain catgories of producers in Northern Ireland.

Labour Statistics

28. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the latest figures for unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: At 9 May 1985 there were 120,072 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland, giving an unemployment rate of 20·8 per cent. This represented a decrease of 1,370 on the April figure.

Nurses

29. **Mr. Martin** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nurses qualified for work in Northern Ireland hospitals in 1984.

Mr. Chris Patten: 1,423.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to seek to ensure that implementation of the nurses' pay award does not lead to any decrease in the number of nurses employed by the health service in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: It is for the health and social services boards to determine the number of nurses they employ in the light of the various demands on their resources, including priorities for the development of services.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nurses and midwives in Northern Ireland earn less than £101 per week take-home pay; what proportion of the total nursing and midwifery staff in Northern Ireland this represents; and if he will break down the figures into grades.

Mr. Chris Patten: 16,601, including approximately 8,500 part-time staff and student nurses. Excluding the latter this represents about 40 per cent. of the total. The breakdown is:

Grade	*Number*
Nursing Officer II	139
Health Visitor Fieldwork Teacher	6
Nursing Sister II	341
Deputy Nursing Sister	58
Staff Nurse	6,396
National Nursing Examination Board	14
Enrolled Nurse	3,408
Nursing Auxiliary	3,053
Student Nurse	3,186
Total	16,601

Note: The available information does not distinguish between statutory and non-statutory deductions (for example car loans, national savings, union deductions and so on).

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will now arrange a meeting between himself and representatives of the Royal College of Nursing Board for Northern Ireland to discuss the findings of the review body on nurses and midwives pay.

Mr. Chris Patten: No. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) on 6 June 1985, at columns 194-96. The awards will be applied to Northern Ireland.

Sinn Fein

30. **Mr. McCusker** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will now proscribe Sinn Fein.

Mr. Hurd: I have no plans to do so at present.

Scheduled Air Services

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to encourage growth in scheduled air services between Northern Ireland and destinations in the European Community and the United States of America.

Mr. Chris Patten: The provision of scheduled air services is primarily a matter for the commercial judgment of airlines, (subject to their obtaining the requisite route licence under the Civil Aviation Act 1982) and for the airport authorities. The Government have encouraged growth in such services by assisting the development of Belfast international airport to the requisite standard.

Airports

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has for consultations with interested parties concerning the possible privatisation of Northern Ireland airports.

Mr. Chris Patten: None at present, but I shall be keeping the matter under review.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans exist for capital expenditure on expansion and improvement of airports in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: The expansion and improvement of airports in Northern Ireland are a matter for the airport licensee. A further stage in the development of Belfast international airport at Aldergrove is currently under way at an estimated cost of £4·5 million. In addition, I understand that a minor works scheme is being undertaken at Eglinton.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the Government's policy, as expressed in Cmnd. 9542, "Airports Policy", that as many airports as possible should be placed in private hands, extends to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes, and I shall be considering the application of that policy where relevant.

Housing

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many houses the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has at Portaferry, Kircubbin, and Portavogie; what is the present waiting list at each of these three locations; and what is the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's future building programme at each of these three locations.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985, c. *84-85*]: This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive who, has advised me that the information is as follows:

	Number of Houses	*Waiting List**
Portaferry	475	44
Kircubbin	292	18
Portavogie	183	15

* As at 30 April 1985

The future building programme, which has regard to the priority and urgent need categories within total waiting lists, as well as to factors such as annual relets is:

Portaferry

21 dwellings planned to start 1 May 1986.

10 dwellings planned to start in November 1988.

Kircubbin

10 dwellings planned to start in April 1988.

Portavogie

3 dwellings planned to start in October 1987.

Conservation

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his policy on the conservation of wetland areas notified as areas of special interest because of their special interest for wetland flora and fauna.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *477*]: Such areas of special scientific interest will be conserved by controlling any potentially damaging operations in accordance with the provisions of articles 24 and 25 of the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. Sites will be monitored by staff from conservation branch, DOE (Northern Ireland).

Caugh Hill Water Treatment Plant

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects work on the sludge treatment works at the Caugh Hill water treatment plant to be completed and the plant to be operating.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *478*]: December 1985. The treatment process should be operational early in 1986.

Richmond Centre, Londonderry

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage return on the capital costs of constructing the Richmond centre he expects when all the accommodation currently accepted or occupied by tenants is producing rent.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. 478-89]: The Richmond centre (offices and shops) is 83·6 per cent. let and these agreed tenancies (in occupation or not) will produce a 6·97 per cent. return on the estimated capital cost of construction plus fees.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* the tenants of the office accommodation in the Richmond centre in Londonderry; and if he will indicate *(a)* the minimum, *(b)* the maximum and *(c)* the average rent paid per square foot for such accommodation.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *478-79*]: Tenants of the Richmond centre office accommodation (known as Richmond Chambers) are as follows:

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Londonderry Development Office
Londonderry Enterprise Zone Office
Valuation and Lands Office
Industrial Development Board

Rentals per square foot are as follows:

(a) minimum £2·79
(b) maximum £3·50
(c) average £2·92

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the current annual interest charges being paid on the sums expended on the Richmond centre; and what was the total final cost of the centre.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *478-79*]: Since the Richmond centre project has been financed from Voted money no interest charges are being paid.

The total final cost will not be known until April 1986, that is at the end of the period for final measurement allowed in the contract. However, the estimated total final cost is £9·8 million. This figure does not allow for additional costs which may arise from final measurement and unsettled contractual claims.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what rental is being paid by the Housing

Executive, per square foot, for its accommodation in the Richmond centre, Londonderry; and what was the annual cost over each of the last five years in respect of the accommodation presently occupied by those elements of the Housing Executive which are transferring to the Richmond centre.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *478-79*]: This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive, who has advised me that the rent for the Housing Executive's accommodation in the Richmond centre is £2·48 per square foot. The accommodation being vacated is largely owned by the Housing Executive; the average rent per square foot for the remainder, approximately 6,200 sq ft out of a total of 18,200 sq ft was as follows for each of the last five years:

	£
1980	1·41
1981	1·41
1982	1·41
1983	1·57
1984	1·80

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* the commercial tenants of the Richmond centre in Londonderry and indicate *(a)* the minimum, *(b)* the maximum and *(c)* the average rents being paid per square foot and the total income from such tenants.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *478-79*]: Commercial tenants of the Richmond centre (shopping centre) are as follows:

Dunne's Stores
Boots PLC
F. O'Hagan
Mrs. M. Hasson (Benetton)
Mr. K. Harrigan
Mrs. G. Pearson (Top Notch 3)
Mr. G. McGrory
Enterprise Zone Office
McGovern PVC Windows (NI) Ltd.
RHC Motor Spares (Derry) Ltd.
Western Distributors Ltd.
GUS (Paige)
Wine Inns Ltd. (Winemark)
Pennywise
Europa Models Ltd.
Apollo Blinds
BSC Trueform
BSC Dolcis
Burton's Topshop
Ratner's
Connect
Esmond Black
Halifax Building Society
Harry Curry
A. M. Dowsall (Bureau de Change)
Mr. and Mrs. M. Doherty

Rentals per square foot let are as follows:

(a) minimum £3·50
(b) maximum £13·00
(c) average £5·50

Storage areas are generally let at £2·00 per square foot.

The total income from the above tenants is approximately £517,000 per annum.

Foyle and Craigavon Bridges (Traffic Flows)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are *(a)* the average, *(b)* the minimum and *(c)* the maximum hourly traffic flows across *(a)* the new Foyle bridge and *(b)* the Craigavon bridge; and what is the hourly capacity of each bridge.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *479*]: The information is as follows:

	Foyle bridge	*Craigavon bridge*
Average hourly traffic flows	436	1,119
Minimum hourly traffic flows	8	13
Maximum hourly traffic flows	969	2,542
Hourly capacity	5,000	6,000

Terrorism

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each year since 1 January 1969 the number of persons who have used their own legally-held (i) rifle, (ii) handgun and (iii) shotgun, to commit a murder connected with the terrorist campaign in Northern Ireland; how many other murders, or cases of manslaughter by shooting, by the holder of a legally-held firearm, using that firearm, in each of the categories listed are known; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *480*]: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Castledawson Bypass

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects work to start on the Castledawson bypass.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *480*]: No starting date has been fixed.

Maghaberry Prison

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* the modifications made to the new prison at Maghaberry over the last two years, or financial years, which have cost more than £1,000 and the cost of each such modification.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *481*]: A substantial amount of planning work has been undertaken over the last two years for a range of modifications to the prison. The transfer of liquid petroleum gas tanks to meet new health and safety regulations has been completed at a cost of just under £27,000. Site works have started on several other projects, but since they have not yet been completed their final costs are not available.

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the roof of the new prison at Maghaberry was designed and built of fireproof materials.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *481*]: The design and material used take proper account of the dangers of combustion, and comply with the fireproofing requirements in the building regulations.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Local Government (Consultation)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is planning to make any changes to the way in which he consults local government following the judgment in R. v. Secretary of State for Social Services: ex parte AMA.

Mr. Newton: We shall be reviewing consultation arrangements with local authorities as part of wider discussions on our proposals for reforming housing benefit. The implications of the AMA action for future consultation arrangements will be considered when the written judgment is available.

NHS (Privatisation)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future plans for further privatisation of National Health Service facilities.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future plans for further privatisation of National Health Service facilities in the Greater London area.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no plans for privatisation of National Health Service facilities. Perhaps the hon. Members are referring to competitive tendering for the provision of services to the National Health Service. Even at this early stage we can see that the introduction of competitive tendering for National Health Service domestic, catering and laundry services is a success. Already 121 tendering exercises have achieved savings of £13·1 million a year. Health authorities are adding the money released to the increased finance provided by the Government and using it to provide improved services for patients in their localities.

We do not want health authorities to restrict themselves to the three services mentioned when seeking to get value for money by competitive tendering. In view of the worthwhile savings being achieved, we would expect them to be applying the same approach for other support services.

Radioactivity

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the health implications of the levels of natural radioactivity present in the atmosphere, and through domestic appliances such as colour television sets, in so far as they relate to levels of radioactivity adjacent to nuclear power installations.

Mr. John Patten: The radiation exposure which derives from all sources of natural radioactivity greatly exceeds that from waste discharged from nuclear power installations. The most recent survey carried out by the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) on radiation exposure of the United Kingdom population indicated that 87 per cent. was due to all natural sources as compared to about 0·1 per cent. from the discharge of radioactive waste from nuclear installations.

Colour TV sets produce very low levels of radiation, these being negligible compared to natural sources. In the NRPB report quoted above it was estimated that the average annual dose received by the United Kingdom population from this source was less than half a millionth of that due to natural background radiation.

Exposure to radiation may ultimately result in cancer, and it is generally accepted that the effects of radiation are directly proportional to the dose, down to the lowest dose levels. This assumes that any dose of radiation, however small, carries with it some risk to health. It has been estimated that exposure to natural background levels of radiation is associated with an annual risk of serious harm of about 1 in 50,000.

Residential Homes

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many private residential homes for the elderly in Lancashire were deregistered in each of the years 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many private residential nursing homes for the elderly in the Greater London area have been de-registered in each year since 1979;

(2) how many staff were employed by his Department for monitoring the de-registrations of private residential nursing homes for the elderly, in each of the years 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. John Patten: Prior to 1 January 1985 this information was not held centrally. Since that date we have received no notifications of cancelled registrations in Lancashire or the Greater London area.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, for each year since 1978, how many homes have been registered *(a)* as nursing homes, *(b)* as residential care homes and *(c)* dually as both nursing and residential care homes; and in each case how many homes are run by (i) voluntary organisations and (ii) private proprietors.

Mr. John Patten: The number of homes registered under the Residential Homes Act 1980 and under the Nursing Homes Act 1975 was as follows:

Residential Homes Act 1980			*Nursing Homes Act 1975*	
	Number of Homes			
31 March	*Voluntary*	*Private*	*31 December*	*Number of Homes*
1978	1,200	2,067	1978	1,111
1979	1,226	2,190	1979	N/A
1980	1,274	2,425	1980	1,135
			1981 (30	
1981	1,283	2,653	June)	1,132
1982	1,322	2,989	1982	1,214
1983	1,414	3,558	1983	1,316
*1984	1,459	4,315	1984	N/A

* Provisional.
N/A not available.

Until the Registered Homes Act 1984 was implemented on 1 January 1985 homes registered as nursing homes were excluded from registration as residential homes. It is not possible to differentiate between types of nursing homes.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on how residential and nursing homes will be affected by the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We have received a number of representations on the possible effects of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985 on residential care and nursing homes. These have come from hon. Members and from individuals and organisations representing residential care and nursing home interests. We are monitoring closely the impact of the regulations and will take appropriate account of the representations received as part of that process.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received complaints that some local authorities are failing to accept responsibility for making assessments for residential or nursing home care.

Mr. John Patten: Local authority social services departments would normally assess applicants only for places in their own residential homes or for places provided by them under arrangements made with voluntary or privately run residential care homes. It would be for district health authorities to do likewise for patients placed in nursing homes under contractual arrangement. We have received no complaints about local authorities failing to make such assessments, but we are aware of concern about assessment of clients otherwise supported from public funds in residential care homes. A joint working party with the local authority associations has been considering what scope there is for improving collaboration between the Department and local authorities over assessment of need and in ensuring that charges met from public funds are reasonable and represent value for money. The working party's report is being considered by us and the associations and we shall be discussing it with them in due course.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, for each year since 1978, what financial support each local authority has given to *(a)* residents in residential homes, *(b)* day-care centres and *(c)* topping up payments.

Mr. John Patten: Information relating to total and net spending by each local social services authority on residential care and day centres is published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in its annual volumes "Personal Social Services Statistics: Actuals", copies of which are in the Library. These cover years up to 1983-84; figures for 1984-85 are not yet available. Under the supplementary benefit regulations, local authority topping up of supplementary benefit support for people in private and voluntary homes has been possible only since 29 April 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* private, *(b)* voluntary and *(c)* public residential homes for the elderly there were in London in each of the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the numbers of homes for the elderly and disabled in Greater London is given in the table:

Number of Homes

As at 31 March	*Statutory*	*Voluntary*	*Private*	*Total*
1979	334	212	179	725
1980	333	208	183	724
1981	336	218	185	739
1982	336	212	198	746
1983	332	210	224	766
1984	333	211	251	795

Information as at 31 March 1985 is not yet available.

Pensions

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to enable increases in the state retirement pension to be given to pensioners who emigrate.

Mr. Whitney: The cost of paying increases in the state retirement pension to British pensioners living outside the United Kingdom would be £144 million per year. The Government have examined the resources available for public expenditure and have concluded that it is not possible at present to make the necessary funds available to provide for uprating of pensions paid to those settled overseas whose pensions are not already uprated.

Specialist Claims Control

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number and percentage of those claimants whose benefits were adjusted as a result of inquiries carried out by specialist claims control teams, who thereafter returned to claiming benefit in full.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many officers there are in Scotland, working either full-time or part-time, as members of specialist claims control teams; and what is his estimate of the annual cost in salaries and expenses of specialist claims control teams in Scotland.

Mr. Whitney: During the year ended 12 March 1985 16·6 man years were used on specialist claims control in Scotland, at a cost of approximately £295,000.

Statutory Sick Pay Scheme

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual loss of tax revenue under the eight week statutory sick pay scheme arising from the reduced level of occupational sick pay paid out by employers.

Mr. Whitney: None.

Occupational sick pay and statutory sick pay are both subject to deductions for income tax.

Supplementary Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he has made to monitor the effects of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985 in relation to households claiming supplementary benefit, ordinary board and lodging allowance *(a)* until 28 July and *(b)* after 28 July who fall within each of the following categories: (i) single persons under the age of 26 years, (ii) single persons over the age of 26 years, (iii) couples with

both partners under the age of 26 years, (iv) couples with one partner over the age of 26 years, (v) couples with both partners over the age of 26 years, (vi) single parents with children under the age of 11 years, (vii) single parents with children over the age of 11 years, (viii) couples with children under the age of 11 years and (ix) couples with children over the age of 11 years.

Mr. Whitney: As part of our monitoring of the effects of the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985 we have arranged to collect and collate statistical returns from local offices. Offices will also be asked to complete a quarterly statistical inquiry. These exercises will include information on the age of the claimant and on the number of children within the assessment unit. In addition to this the Social Security Policy Inspectorate has been asked to extend its preliminary work on supplementary benefit board and lodging payments to look at the operation of the new arrangements.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest available information concerning the number of *(a)* single persons under the age of 26 years, *(b)* single persons over the age of 26 years, *(c)* couples with both partners under the age of 26 years, *(d)* couples with both partners over the age of 26 years, *(e)* single parents with children under the age of 11 years, *(f)* single parents with children over the age of 11 years, *(g)* couples with children under the age of 11 years and *(h)* couples with children over the age of 11 years claiming supplementary benefit ordinary board and lodging allowance who are, or have been, affected by the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985; and if he will publish this information for (i) Great Britain as a whole, (ii) England, (iii) Wales and (iv) Scotland, respectively.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested on the numbers of those in ordinary board and lodging accommodation affected by the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985 is not yet available.

Mr. Peter Sutcliffe

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what privileges are currently accorded to Mr. Peter Sutcliffe at Broadmoor hospital; what is the basis on which these privileges are permitted; if he receives any privileges not available to other patients of similar status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It would be an improper breach of medical confidence to discuss the circumstances of individual hospital patients. I can, however, tell my hon. Friend that a recent newspaper report concerning special privileges was in all important respects untrue and in some respects was quite ridiculously inaccurate.

NHS Management Board

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the terms and conditions of appointment of each member of the National Health Service management board together with all their outside financial interests known to his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The following members of the NHS management board were already established civil servants prior to their appointment to membership of the board and remain subject to the terms and conditions of service of established civil servants:

Dr. E. D. Acheson (Chief Medical Officer)
Mrs. A. A. B. Poole (Chief Nursing Officer)
Mr. G. A. Hart (Director of Operations)
Mrs. G. T. Banks (Director of Health Authority Finance)
Mr. C. Graham (Director of Health Authority Liaison)

Of the other members of the board:

Mr. V. G. Paige (Chairman) has been appointed on a three-year contract in accordance with the Civil Service Commission's procedures for limited-period appointments. He is subject to the conditions of service applicable to civil servants. He remains a non-executive member of the board of the National Freight consortium.

Mr. M. J. Fairey (Director of Planning and Information Technology) is an employee of North East Thames RHA on secondment to his present position.

Mr. G. I. Mills (Director of Financial Management) is being made available for three years from 1 July 1985 by his firm, Price Waterhouse. A fee will be paid to Price Waterhouse. The Civil Service Commission are satisfied with the arrangement.

The personnel director of the board has yet to be appointed. The post will be (at least initially) a limited-period appointment and will be subject to the conditions of service applicable to civil servants.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what remuneration and expenses will be paid to Mr. Idris Pearce in respect of his part-time service on the National Health Service management board.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Mr. Pearce's firm, Richard Ellis, will be paid a fee for his services of £15,000 per annum plus VAT. Expenses incurred in the course of Mr. Pearce's duties within our Department will be reimbursed at civil service rates.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any special arrangements to cope with potential conflicts of interest have been made in relation to the appointment of Mr. Idris Pearce to the National Health Service management board.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Mr. Pearce as adviser to the National Health Service management board will be precluded from taking any part in discussions which may directly affect commercial relations between our Department or Health authorities and his firm Richard Ellis. He will be required to make a declaration of interest on each occasion when Richard Ellis submits a tender or obtains a commission with our Department or a health authority coming within the NHS management board's area of responsibility.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it a condition of Mr. Idris Pearce's appointment as a member of the National Health Service management board that during its currency, Richard Ellis, chartered surveyors, may not buy or sell National Health Service property.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Mr. Pearce has been appointed part-time property adviser to the National Health Service management board. We are satisfied that adequate arrangements have been made for declarations of interest by Mr. Pearce. Mr. Pearce has been as concerned as we have been to ensure that arrangements have been made which will preclude him from direct involvement in any commercial dealings between our Department and health authorities and Richard Ellis.

Contraceptives

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department was involved in assessing the Today contraceptive sponge before it was put on the market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Today contraceptive sponge was the subject of an application to our Department for a product licence under the Medicines Act 1968. We decided that the application should be referred for advice to the Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials, one of the advisory committees established under section 4 of the Act. The committee took account of all the available evidence and recommended that a licence should be granted and this advice was accepted.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what rules limit the description of any form of contraceptive as safe.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Those contraceptives that are licensable as medicinal products under the Medicines Act 1968 are assessed by the licensing authority for safety quality and efficacy. One of the advisory committees set up under the Medicines Act is consulted where necessary. Any data sheets, labels, package inserts and promotional material must be consistent with the terms and conditions of the product licence and must not be false or misleading.

Hospitals (Infection Rates)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the post surgical infection rate in National Health Service hospitals in each year since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible when we have had an opportunity to see whether sufficient worthwhile information is available.

Complaints Procedures

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he intends to establish complaints procedures to apply to services directly managed by regional health authorities, those managed by special health authorities and those managed by boards of governors.

Mr. John Patten: I assume the hon. Member is referring to those special health authorities which provide hospital services to National Health Service patients. Services provided by those authorities, together with those managed directly by regional health authorities, are already covered by the Department's guidance on complaints procedures.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what discussions he has had about an appeals mechanism for National Health Service prescription of scheduled drugs with representatives of pharmaceutical companies;

(2) whether he has sought from the drug companies any undertaking that they will not seek directly or indirectly to subject decisions or appeals against refusals to prescribe drugs not on the limited list by whatever mechanism to judical review;

(3) what advice he will give committees determining applications to prescribe scheduled drugs on the National Health Service with a view to minimising the danger of their decisions being overturned by judicial review.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to our offer to the British Medical Association of a locally based appeals mechanism if they believed it to be necessary to allow general practitioners to prescribe scheduled drugs in exceptional cases.

We have had no discussions about these arrangements with pharmaceutical companies, who would not be a party to the appeals. The proposed local professional committees would be concerned solely with the clinical aspects of individual cases. Clinical decisions are not normally a matter for the courts.

Low-income Families

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate for the number of low-income working families with effective marginal tax rates taking into account loss of benefits of 100 per cent. or over, 80 per cent. or over and 60 per cent. or over, if possible, divided into those with and without children; and, in each case, what percentage of all working families they represent.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the exact information requested is not available. The family expenditure survey data have been analysed to give estimates of working families with various ranges of marginal tax rates but not precisely those requested. The largest estimates derived wholly from these data relate to 1981. Further tentative estimates have been made of the current position and these are shown in the table.

Estimated number of working families with marginal tax rates of 50 per cent. or more†*

Marginal tax rate (per cent.)	*Number*	*Percentage of appropriate group of working families*
Families with children		
100 or over	70,000	about 1
75 or over	210,000	about 3½
50 or over	300,000	about 5
Families without children		
50 or over‡	60,000	about ½

* Excludes families subject to higher rates of income tax.

† These estimates do not take account of the number taken out of tax as a result of the 1984 and 1985 Budgets. It is estimated that about 20,000 families with children with marginal tax rates of 50 per cent. or over will have been affected in this way.

‡ The sample numbers are too small to allow further analyses.

Single Payments

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* an update for 1983 of the information on single payments in table 34.97 of "Social Security Statistics 1984," or publish as much of that information which is available.

Mr. Whitney: The information for 1983 is as follows:

	Thousands	*Average amount* £
All payments	*1,890	75·71
Pensioners	188	62·23
Unemployed	976	76·02
Others	728	78·57

* Rounded to nearest 10,000.
Source: 100 per cent. count.

Work Expenses

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the average work expenses of those on supplementary benefit with part-time earnings; and what are the average work expenses of lone parents with part-time earnings on supplementary benefit.

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average amount allowed for work expenses to supplementary benefit claimants with part-time earnings.

Mr. Whitney: The only information on average work expenses of persons receiving supplementary benefit comes from a study* of the tapered earnings disregard applicable to lone parents which was commissioned by the Department and carried out by the social policy research unit of the University of York in 1982. Of those lone parents who had work expenses the average weekly costs of travel to work and child care were £1·18 and £0·94 respectively.

* Lone Mothers Paid Work and Social Security; Occasional Papers on Social Administration 77.

Social Security Review

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why he has not published the findings of the research commissioned from Social and Community Planning Research into child benefit in the background papers to the Green Paper on the "Reform of Social Security".

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether the assessment unit for income support will in all cases be the same as the assessment unit for supplementary benefit;

(2) whether all those receiving income support or family credit will be automatically eligible for help with funeral expenses from the social fund;

(3) whether the loss to supplemetary benefit claimants of a proportion of their housing benefit in respect of rates will be balanced by a compensating adjustment in the levels of income support;

(4) whether the transitional protection to be introduced at the time of change from supplementary benefit to income support will preserve the real value or the cash value of benefit;

(5) whether a couple claiming income support *(a)* with children or *(b)* without children will receive less than the rate for a couple over 25 years when (i) the income support claimant is under 25 years, (ii) the claimant's partner is under 25 years or (iii) both are under 25 years; and whether, where this is the case, the differential will in each instance be the same;

(6) whether a disabled person claiming income support who is also a lone parent will receive a premium in respect of each of these conditions;

(7) whether a premium rate of income will be paid to those caring for elderly or disabled persons;

(8) if he will list in order of magnitude all the premium rates to which persons claiming income support may be entitled;

(9) whether attendance allowance and mobility allowance will be disregarded in the means test for income support;

(10) whether he proposes to make changes in benefits payable to those caring for elderly and disabled people.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how the sum in the proposed family credit allowance to cover the cost of school meals will be calculated.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will amplify the meaning of accrued pension rights under the state earnings related pension scheme as the term is used in the Green Paper of 3 June.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Members and my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Child Care Hearings

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the average length of delay of child care hearings involving a guardian ad litem in the year to May 1984 and for the period since May 1984;

(2) if he will make available details of the total number of guardians ad litem appointed for child care cases since May 1984 and the regional variation in such appointments.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not held centrally on the numbers of guardians ad litem in child care cases nor on the duration of hearings in which they are involved. The Department commissioned preliminary research from Bristol university into how the new guardian ad litem arrangements were working in practice. The results of the research suggested that the arrangements had made a reasonable start. There were indications of diversity from court to court in the rates of appointing guardians ad litem and of more measured consideration of complex cases involving guardians. However, Bristol is now undertaking a more comprehensive study on representation of the child which will help ascertain how well the arrangements are working in the longer term.

NHS (Pay)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the total amount of pay received in 1985-86 by each of the categories of National Health Service staff mentioned in the note to editors appended to his Department's press release 85/148, following the implementation of the Government's decisions on the pay review body's recommendations; what was the equivalent figure in each case for 1984-85; and what percentage increase this represents in each case.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We cannot provide the information requested as the final details of the implementation of the pay award for nursing staff and professions allied to medicine have not yet been settled with the staff sides.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 14 June 1985

NORTHERN IRELAND

Metallic Marker Pens

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has over the use in schools in Northern Ireland of metallic marker pens with gold and silver lettering that contain xylene xylol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The information is not readily available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Government Grants

Mr. Beggs asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has given consideration to seeking to recover Government grants paid out to successful and profitable Northern Ireland companies which cease manufacturing in Northern Ireland and transfer their production to mainland factories; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: It is the practice to attach repayment conditions where companies receive selective financial assistance or standard capital grant from the Department of Economic Development. Conditions vary depending upon the nature of the assistance and are time limited. Where a company ceases manufacturing in Northern Ireland while recovery conditions are current, repayment of grant, either in whole or in part, would normally be sought.

Kinsale Gas

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will publish the external advice he received which led him to cancel the Kinsale gas project.

Dr. Boyson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) on 12 June 1985 at column *476*.

Firearms Dealers (Ammunition)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many rounds of each type of commonly used ammunition for *(a)* ·22 rifles and *(b)* shotguns, a firearms dealer in Northern Ireland is allowed to hold on his premises.

Mr. Scott: Each year the Secretary of State gives a direction to the Chief Constable under Article 37(3) of the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order as to the conditions to be imposed on firearms dealers' certificates of registration. The directive includes restrictions on the amount of ammunition which firearms dealers may hold on their premises. The numbers of rounds in individual cases varies between dealers in the light of the previous year's sales of each category of ammunition by the dealer, as well as the standard of security provided.

Investment

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the level of investment in Northern Ireland industry by people residing in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: Information on shares in Northern Ireland industry held by Northern Ireland residents is not available.

Conservation

Mr. Archer asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what ornithological or other scientific surveys were carried out on the area of scientific interest land at Lough Ross, Lisnakea, County Fermanagh, before the agricultural improvements recently approved by the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture went ahead; what steps are being taken to monitor and assess the impact of drainage and related works on breeding wetland birds and other aspects of nature conservation interest present on the site; and if he will make a statement on the destruction of the nest and eggs of a species of bird specially protected by the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, during the course of the agricultural scheme.

Mr. Chris Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *476-77*]: No such surveys were carried out by conservation branch of the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) prior to the commencement of agricultural improvement previously notified to the Department of Agriculture (Northern Ireland) as it was apparent that the prime scientific interest of the site was not going to be damaged.

No steps are being taken to monitor the site on a regular basis as there is no evidence to suggest that the works will have any impact on the intrinsic nature conservation significance of the site.

I am not aware of the destruction of nests or eggs of a species of bird specially protected by wildlife legislation.

River Roe (Restocking)

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* an account of the steps taken to restock the River Roe and its tributary the Owenreagh River after the accidental poisoning of the river and the annual costs of the restocking programme to date; and if he will indicate the success of the programme and whether the insect and fish life has yet recovered.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *478*]: Following the accidental chemical spillage from Caugh Hill water treatment works in 1982, a biological survey was carried out and an extensive electro-fishing survey was jointly undertaken by the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland and the Foyle Fisheries Commission; in the light of the information from these and subsequent surveys, the following fish stocks have been placed in the Rivers Roe and Owenreagh.

	1983	*1984*
Salmon:		
Eyed ova	118,000	—
Under 1 year old	56,300	—

	1983	1984
Over 1 year old	30,000	15,000
Brown Trout:		
Under 1 year old	20,000	—
Over 2 years old	400	1,200

The cost of this restocking was as follows:

	£
1982-83	20,218
1983-84	25,233
1984-85	754

Continuing monitoring surveys and the annual counts of spawning redds by the Foyle Fisheries Commission indicate a good recovery of fish life and invertebrate fauna in the affected areas of the rivers.

Firearms Certificates

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* setting out the number of *(a)* applications, *(b)* renewals and *(c)* variations of firearms certificates dealt with in each of the last six years or financial years; and how many in each year were (i) granted and (ii) refused.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 June 1985, c. *479*]: The information is as follows:

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Applications	4,389	4,362	3,639	4,297	3,714	4,011
Granted	4,122	4,068	3,279	3,920	3,378	3,698
Refused	267	294	360	377	336	313
Renewals	19,121	14,201	29,704	21,685	17,016	30,066
Granted	19,029	14,122	29,626	21,608	16,937	29,978
Refused	92	79	78	77	79	88
Variations	10,278	8,934	9,140	9,246	7,748	8,574
Granted	9,947	8,547	8,750	8,807	7,359	8,109
Refused	331	387	390	439	389	465

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

BBC External Services

Mr. Merlyn Rees asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the review of the BBC external services received by him on 9 December 1984 is to be published.

Mr. Renton: I announced publication of the 1984 review of the BBC external services in the course of the Adjournment debate on 4 February at columns 725-28. Copies of the report were placed in the Library of the House on the same day.

Namibia

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any representative of Her Majesty's Government will be present in Windhoek, Namibia, when the new transitional administration will be inaugurated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: No. We have made it clear to the South African Government that we do not recognise the new administrative arrangements for Namibia. They do not affect South Africa's responsibility to bring about Namibian independence in accordance with the terms of SCR 435.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Law Society (Report)

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Attorney-General if he has yet received a copy of the draft of the final report submitted by Coopers and Lybrand Associates to the Law Society reviewing the Law Society's affairs.

The Attorney-General: I understand a copy was sent by the Law Society to the Lord Chancellor's Department for information on 31 May.

Public Record Office

Mr. Best asked the Attorney-General what changes have been made to the cash limit on class XIII, vote 13, (Public Record Office).

The Attorney-General: The cash limit on class XIII, vote 13 (Public Record Office) has been reduced by £334,000 from £10,821,000 to £10,487,000.

The reduction takes account of £334,000 transferred to class XIV, vote 1 (Property Services Agency) and reflected in the Main Estimate, to provide funds towards modifications and improvements to the air-conditioning system at the Public Record Office, Kew, as recommended by the independent review commissioned following the closure of the building last year. A copy of the report on the review was placed in the Library on 27 March.

The reduction will have no effect on the total of public expenditure.

WALES

Metallic Marker Pens

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has over the use in schools in Wales of metallic marker pens with gold and silver lettering that contain xylene/xylol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: My right hon. Friend has no information on the extent of the use of these pens in schools. The provision and use of writing materials in schools is a matter for local education authorities.

Sheep Scab

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of sheep scab were reported in Wales during the past 12 months; what were the corresponding figures for the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The table gives the number of outbreaks of sheep scab in Wales in each of the past 10 years, each year beginning on 1 July.

Year	*Outbreaks*
1975-76	2
1976-77	3
1977-78	0
1978-79	0
1979-80	0
1980-81	11
1981-82	1
1982-83	12
1983-84	11
1984-85	*15

* To 31 May.

Welfare Rights Officers

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many welfare rights officers are currently employed by social services departments in Wales and as to the distribution of such welfare rights officers by county.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not available centrally.

Motorways (Lighting)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many miles of motorway there are in Wales; and what types of lighting are in use thereon and where.

Mr. John Stradling Thomas: There are 74 miles of motorway. Eighteen miles are lit by low pressure sodium lighting, of which 12 miles are in Gwent and South Glamorgan (Coldra to St. Mellons) and six miles in West Glamorgan (Margam to Baglan).

Milk Quotas

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any further proposals for investigating the effect in Wales of the introduction of dairy quotas, in cases of farmers who are still suffering severe financial hardship.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I am already fully aware of the effect which the introduction of milk quotas have caused for some producers in Wales. However re-allocation of quota under the outgoers' scheme has enabled us to restore small producers to their 1983 levels of production and make exceptional hardship awards in full for 1985-86.

Agricultural Workers

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many full-time agricultural workers there are in Wales; and how many there were on 1 January 1970, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Details of the numbers of workers on agricultural holdings are collected in a full census in June and a sample census in December each year. The numbers of persons recorded as working full-time on agricultural holdings in Wales in the years requested were as follows:

	June	*December*
1970	32,280	34,946
1980	33,351	33,257
1981	33,339	32,704
1982	32,851	32,558
1983	32,171	32,487
1984	32,707	32,307

Figures exclude wives of farmers and directors; and salaried managers for which no data on full-time working are available. The 1970 figure is thought to be affected by definitional changes at that time.

Mid Wales Development

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any proposals for increasing the funding available to Mid Wales Development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Decisions about the funding of Mid Wales Development will be considered in the normal way in his year's review of public expenditure.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid-for-Trade Provision

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the future funding of the aid-for-trade provision.

Mr. Renton: The funding of the aid trade provision is kept under continuous review as part of the financial planning of the aid programme. The planning allocation for 1985-86 is £66 million.

Operation Roadrunner

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will consider making funds available to support operation roadrunner in operating lorries into Ethiopia and Sudan.

Mr. Renton: We channel our assistance to voluntary efforts largely through the member agencies of the Disasters Emergency Committee. We have therefore suggested to representatives of operation roadrunner that they should offer their services through one of the established voluntary agencies operating in Sudan, to whom we have already provided very substantial assistance.

Bilateral Aid

Mr. Barnett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the totals of bilateral aid expenditure in the renewable natural resources and other agriculture-related economic sectors for 1983 and 1984; and what proportion of the total bilateral aid programme each of the figures represents.

Mr. Renton: Following are the figures:

	£ million	As per cent. of total bilateral allocable by sector
1983	163	28
1984	124	19

Falkland Islands

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how many Falkland Islands-based firms which do not have outside ownership have received grants or loans from the Falkland Islands Development Corporation;

(2) how many firms have received grants or loans from the Falkland Islands Development Corporation since it was established; and how many of those firms have their head office in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: The Falkland Islands Development Corporation has provided assistance to 54 companies to date, both limited and sole traders, of which three have head offices in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Falklands Islands Development Corporation building projects are subject to planning control.

Mr. Renton: Yes. The Falkland Islands Development Corporation is subject to the same planning regulations as all other individuals and corporate bodies in the islands.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many houses for the permanent residents of the Falkland Islands have been built and are planned to be built under the auspices of the development corporation.

Mr. Renton: The Falkland Islands Development Corporation is not responsible for housing construction except in cases where accommodation is required in a remote location as an integral part of a project which is being assisted. Only one home has been built to date and this is occupied by permanent residents.

The corporation will shortly be considering a proposal for the creation of a wholly owned property development subsidiary which would undertake a programme of housing construction.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many seats on the board of the Falkland Islands Development Corporation are held by permanent local residents of the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Renton: Five.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how many jobs have been created by the Falkland Islands Development Corporation since its creation; and what was the average cost per job;

(2) how many construction jobs have been created by the Falkland Islands Development Corporation; and how many of these have been taken by permanent local residents of the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Renton: In view of the shortage of labour in the Islands, the Falkland Islands Development Corporation is not specifically required to create new employment opportunities and does not therefore maintain records of relevant information. However, I understand that assistance has been given in the establishment of three construction-related businesses with a total of five jobs, three of which are held by permanent local residents and two by immigrants who are now permanently resident.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the ratio of public to private investment in the Falkland Islands Development Corporation investment.

Mr. Renton: As at 31 December 1984 the ratio was 44·5 per cent. public to 55·5 per cent. private.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* the chief executive, general manager and board members of the Falkland Islands Development Corporation; and what are the salaries of the chief executive and general manager.

Mr. Renton: The membership of the development corporation is as follows:

Sir Rex Hunt—Chairman
Mr D Taylor — Executive Vice Chairman (Chief Executive, Falkland Islands Government)
Mr S Armstrong—General Manager
Mr S Wallace
Mr R Binnie
Mr T Betts
Mr N Watson
Mr A Cameron
Mr H Rowlands
Mr M Gaiger
Mr M Crosse

The salaries of the executive vice chairman and general manager are £34,500 and £21,700 respectively.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Stonehenge (Disturbances)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were *(a)* arrested and *(b)* charged in connection with recent disturbances at and near to Stonehenge; what were the grounds of arrest and the nature of the charges; how many police officers and others were injured; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Women's Prisons

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he has any long-term proposals in respect of Cookham Wood women's prison; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he has any long-term proposals in respect of Bullwood Hall women's prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans which affect the roles performed by Cookham Wood prison and Bullwood Hall prison and youth custody centre.

Durham Prison

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any long-term proposals in respect of "H" wing at Durham prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans which affect the role of H wing, Durham prison. Its use for female prisoners is, however, kept under constant review.

Holloway Prison

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to increase the capacity of Holloway prison, and the place in any such proposals of the CI psychiatric unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to questions from the hon. Members for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) on 13 June at column *501*.

Concessionary Television Licences

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to the letter from the social services committee of Bradford metropolitan council, dated 26 April, concerning the conditions of eligibility for concessionary television licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Since television licensing matters are for the Home Office the letter from the director of social services of Bradford Metropolitan Council to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has been passed to me and I shall reply to it shortly.

Charity Commission

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any changes to announce in the cash limit for the Charity Commission Vote, class XIII, vote 16.

Mr. Brittan: Subject to Parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit on the Charity Commission Vote will be raised by £368,000 from £4,861,000 to £5,229,000. The increase provides for additional costs associated with the computer installation in the official custodian's division.

The additional expenditure will be charged to the reserve and does not add to the planning total of public expenditure.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Capital Transfer Tax

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has received any proposals from the Forestry Commission advocating the extension of exemption from capital transfer tax for lands of heritage value to ancient semi-natural woodlands, subject to their management meeting the approval of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Forestry Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I have not received any such proposals. Conservation objectives are already recognised in the capital transfer tax code, which provides exemption for land of outstanding scenic, historic or scientific interest, and for land essential for the protection of the character and amenities of a building of outstanding historic or scientific interest. Woodlands may qualify for this relief if they represent an integral or primary element in either case.

Britoil

Mr. Forth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about his plans for the Britoil sale.

Mr. Moore: I am now able to give further details of the arrangement for this sale.

Subject to market conditions, the offer for sale, which will be for a total of some 243 million shares, is intended to take place later during the summer. The offer price, which will be fixed and announced at that time, will be payable in two instalments; one on application and the second approximately three months later. A "pathfinder" document, setting out most of the up-to-date information on the company, but not including the offer for sale price, will be published some weeks before impact day.

Special arrangements will be made so that holders of the shares to be sold will receive the interim dividend for 1985 which will be declared by Britoil on publication of its interim results in mid-July. Existing shareholders will, subject to any legal restrictions overseas, be given certain preferential allocation entitlements to acquire the shares on offer. Any shareholder wishing to purchase shares in addition to those which he will be entitled to on a preferential basis will be able to do so by applying on a public application form.

Fifteen million of the shares on offer will be available for preferential allocation to employees of Britoil, subject to a limit of 10,000 shares per employee.

To encourage wider share ownership throughout the UK stockbroking firms across the country have been approached to act as regional co-ordinators for this offer for sale to encourage applications from private investors. Allotment commissions will be payable to certain financial intermediaries in respect of successful applications submitted by them.

PRIME MINISTER

Cruise Missiles (Exercises)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Prime Minister, if any test communication exercises on United States Air Force ground-based cruise missile launch procedures have been conducted between herself and the President of the United States of America since cruise missiles became operational in the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to discuss the details of arrangements for ministerial control of nuclear weapons.

Sailing Vessel Marques (Loss)

Mr. Dobson asked the Prime Minister whether she has received a letter from Ms. Shirley Cooklin about the loss of the Marques.

The Prime Minister: Yes. I sympathise with her in the loss of her son and she is right to refer to all those who lost their lives in this tragedy as splendid examples of adventurous youth at its best. She also expressed her concern about the timing of the formal investigation into the loss of the Marques. Arrangements are being made to set up the court of inquiry as soon as practicable.

Portsmouth Health Authority

Mr. Dobson asked the Prime Minister, further to her answer to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras on Monday, 10 June, *Official Report*, column *304*. (1) whether the discussions referred to were initiated by officials of the Department of Health and Social Security or the administrators of the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health authority;

(2) whether Department of Health and Social Services officials put forward the possibility of any relaxation of financial restraint or additional funding in the event of the health authority contracting out management of a hospital.

The Prime Minister: As I explained in my previous reply, Ministers are always interested in examining options for improving the management of NHS hospitals. Contracting out the management of a hospital is one such option and officials of the Department acting on behalf of Ministers got in touch with the Administrator of the health authority to see if he was interested in this approach.

Obviously the Department of Health and Social Security would not have offered financial inducements to the health authority to contract out management of a hospital, since the whole object of doing so would be to obtain better value for money in the provision of services.

ENVIRONMENT

Yelland Power Station

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if there are any site investigations currently being undertaken with a view to the possible storage of low, intermediate or high-level nuclear waste at Yelland power station on the Yaw estuary.

Mr. Patrick Jenkin: No site investigatons are being undertaken in connection with the storage of nuclear waste at East Yelland power station. So far as the development of disposal facilities for radioactive waste is concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 25 April at column *548*.

Improvement Grants (Stockport)

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the level of take-up of general improvement grants in the Stockport metropolitan borough in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: The figures for 1984 appear on page 93 of "Local Housing Statistics" no. 73; a copy is in the Library.

Local Government (Computer, Technical and Scientific Services)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to the answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, columns *343-4*, to which authorities and bodies the Minister for Local Government has offered his Department's good offices in considering how worthwhile work on *(a)* central computer services, *(b)* technical services and *(c)* scientific services currently provided by the metropolitan counties and the Greater London council could be maintained; in what form the offer was made in each case; on what date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This offer has been made to all successors, in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend the member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 16 November last at columns *378-79*.

European Non-quota Textile Scheme

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* allocations approved to date for each local authority under the European regional development fund non-quota textile measures scheme.

Mr. Waldegrave: The allocations approved to end-May 1985 under ERDF non-quota textile measures are as follows:

Zone and Authority	*Grant* £
Lancashire	
Rossendale district	100,025
Hyndburn district	108,525
Pendale district	307,025
Lancaster district	721,683
Burnley district	197,784
Lancashire Enterprises Ltd.	895,090
Total	2,330,132
Greater Manchester	
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough	565,625
Bolton Metropolitan Borough	598,560
Wigan Metropolitan Borough	157,300
Bury Metropolitan Borough	45,613
Tameside Metropolitan Borough	222,850
Oldham Metropolitan Borough	377,886
Greater Manchester Council/Greater Manchester Economic Development Company	200,000
Total	2,167,834
West Yorkshire	
Calderdale Metropolitan Borough	23,500
Kirklees Metropolitan Borough	436,425
West Yorkshire County Council	352,371
Total	812,296

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will assess grant-related expenditure for transition costs to the London boroughs resulting from abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. Grant related expenditure for local authorities in London will continue to be assessed on the same basis as for authorities elsewhere in the country.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which abolition authorities responded favourably to his letter of 17 April regarding discussions with the Government about the mechanics of abolition; and what was the response of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Trades Union Congress.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information should be sought from the organisations concerned.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to direct the London residuary body to meet any of its transition costs from borrowing.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to Clause 75 of the Local Government Bill.

DEFENCE

Stealth and UHSIC Technology

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the United States Government have provided the United Kingdom Government with access to stealth and UHSIC technology.

Mr. Butler: There are general arrangements covering the exchange of information between the United States and United Kingdom on various aspects of defence technology. It is not our practice to give details of these.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Aid and Trade

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the proportion of United Kingdom produced materials used in the projects supported through the aid and trade provisions in each year since 1979.

Mr. Channon: Support from the aid and trade provision is generally confined to foods and services provided from the United Kingdom. The information my hon. Friend requests is not available but the content of projects won with ATP backing is overwhelmingly of United Kingdom origin.

Post Office (Delivery Delays)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next meets the chairman of the Post Office, if he will discuss the recent report from the Post Office Users' National Council on postal delivery delays.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend welcomes the determined steps the Post Office is taking to ensure that its customers receive a satisfactory service, and he discusses progress with the chairman of the Post Office whenever it is appropriate to do so.

COCOM

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many officials from his Department, and of what grade, are assigned permanently or temporarily to COCOM in Paris.

Mr. Channon: None; but officials from my Department, up to assistant secretary level and including technically qualified staff, regularly form part of the United Kingom delegation to COCOM meetings.

South Africa

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set out details of all trade missions financed in whole or in part by his Department which have visited South Africa since 1979.

Mr. Channon: Details of the sponsoring organisations, the cost to BOTB, and the number of participants taking part in BOTB supported outward missions to South Africa are:

Sponsor	*Grant (£)*	*Participants*
1979		
Walsall Chamber of Commerce & Industry	4,485	12
Engineering Industries Association	3,450	10
South Bucks & East Berks Chamber of Commerce & Industry	5,175	14
Sheffield Chamber of Commerce	7,245	20
East London & South West Essex Export Club	4,485	12
Scottish Council Development & Industry	7,245	20
Conventry Chamber of Commerce & Industry	3,450	9
Agricultural Engineers Association Ltd.	2,760	6
Leicester and Coventry Chamber of Commerce	3,795	10
Manchester Chamber of Commerce & Industry	2,760	7
Birmingham Chamber of Industry & Commerce	6,555	18
Dundee & Tayside Chamber of Commerce and Industry	6,210	17
British Ceramic Plant & Machinery Manufacturers Association	3,450	10
Engineering Industries Association	6,555	18
	67,620	183
1980		
Engineering Industries Association	4,830	13
Bristol Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Shipping	4,830	13
London Chamber of Commerce & Industry	3,105	8
Worcester & District Chamber of Commerce	4,140	11
Scottish Council Development and Industry	5,175	14
Publishers Association	4,485	12
Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry	4,485	13
British Stationery & Office Products Federation	5,520	15
Birmingham Chamber of Industry & Commerce	4,830	13
Engineering & Building Centre	6,900	19
Engineering Industries Association	7,245	20
	55,545	151
1981		
Engineering Industries Association	6,900	19
Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd.	6,900	19
South Wales Exporters Club	7,245	20
Worcester & District Chamber of Commerce	5,865	16
Scottish Council Development & Industry	8,715	20
Sheffield Chamber of Commerce	7,055	16
Export Council for the British Jewellery & Giftware Federation	3,735	9

Sponsor	Grant (£)	Participants
Bristol Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Shipping	9,960	23
Export Association of Nottingham	4,980	11
Birmingham Chamber of Industry & Commerce	9,130	21
Manchester Chamber of Commerce & Industry	10,790	25
Dundee & Tayside Chamber of Commerce & Industry	8,715	20
Engineering & Building Centre	7,885	18
Engineering Industries Association	7,885	18
Walsall Chamber of Commerce & Industry	7,885	18
	113,645	273
1982		
Engineering Industries Association	9,130	21
Coventry Chamber of Commerce & Industry	9,960	23
Thames Export Club	8,685	19
Association of British Manufacturers of Photographic Cine & Audio Visual Equipment	4,980	11
Export Council for the British Jewellery and Giftware Federation	4,565	11
Worcester & District Chamber of Commerce	2,075	10
Scottish Council Development & Industry	7,470	17
Engineering Industries Association	7,885	18
Birmingham Chamber of Industry & Commerce	7,055	16
Engineering & Building Centre	4,980	21
Derby & Derbyshire Chamber of Commerce	4,565	11
Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce	7,055	16
Engineering Industries Association	5,760	12
Society of Motor Manufacturers & Traders Ltd.	8,160	16
	92,325	222
1983		
Engineering Industries Association	5,760	12
South Bucks & East Berks Chamber of Commerce and Industry	5,280	10
Association of British Mining Equipment Companies	2,880	15
Walsall Chamber of Commerce & Industry	10,560	21
Federation of Sussex Industries	10,560	21
Coventry Chamber of Commerce & Industry	8,640	17
Sheffield Chamber of Commerce	12,960	26
Engineering Industries Association	5,280	11
Bristol Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Shipping	9,120	18
Scottish Council Development & Industry	10,080	20
Birmingham Chamber of Industry & Commerce	7,680	15
Manchester Chamber of Commerce & Industry	10,560	21
Dundee & Tayside Chamber of Commerce	12,480	25
South Wales Exporters Club	6,240	12
Engineering Industries Association	9,600	19
	127,680	263
1984		
Leicester & County Chamber of Commerce & Industry	8,640	17
Engineering Industries Association	9,600	19
Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders	7,680	15
Merseyside Chamber of Commerce	12,480	25
Federation of Sussex Industries	7,200	14
Worcester & Hereford Area Chamber of Commerce	11,520	23
Coventry Chamber of Commerce & Industry	10,080	20
Scottish Council Development & Industry	8,640	17
Agricultural Engineers Association Ltd.	4,800	9
London Chamber of Commerce & Industry	7,680	15
Engineering Industries Association	5,280	11
Birmingham Chamber of Industry & Commerce	11,040	22
Sheffield Chamber of Commerce	8,640	17
Engineering Industries Association	13,920	28
	127,200	252
*1985**		
Engineering Industries Association Ltd.	12,480	25
Dorset Chamber of Commerce & Industry	7,200	14
Bristol Chamber of Commerce & Industry	9,600	19
Federation of Sussex Industries	7,200	14
	36,480	72

* Up to 31 March.

Note:

Due to a clerical error, the total number of missions supported for 1979 was incorrectly stated in my answers of 3 April and 21 May 1985 to the hon. Member for Sheffield Central. The total number of missions was 14 and not 13 as stated. This affects the total financial expenditure for 1979 and 1980.

Business Statistics

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the surplus of business formation over closures in the northern region since 1979; and whether he will give a breakdown by turnover.

Mr. Trippier: Information on the numbers of starts and stops of businesses in the regions during the period 1980-1983 broken down by sizebands of turnover was published in an article in "British Business" on 2 November 1984. Further information showing the breakdown by sector of trade was published in "British Business" on 18 January 1985.

Copies of both articles have been placed in the Library.

House of Fraser

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *193*, if he had full information as to the source of financial backing for the Al Fayed bid for the House of Fraser.

Mr. Fletcher: The Secretary of State had sufficient information to enable him to take a decision as to whether or not to refer the acquisition of House of Fraser plc by Al Fayed Investment Holdings plc to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Infant Teachers

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many qualified infant teachers completed teacher training in 1982, 1983 and 1984; what is the estimated number for the current year; and how these figures compare with the estimated number of vacancies for such teachers in England and Wales.

Mr. Dunn: Separate information about infant teachers is not readily available. Estimates for primary teachers, covering infant and junior age groups but not nursery or middle, suggest that about 2,700 qualified in 1983 and 2,900 in 1984. Comparable estimates are not available for numbers qualifying in 1982 or for those expected to complete their training in 1985. Nor is information available on the numbers of vacancies for those groups of teachers in the years requested.

Secondary Schools (Selection System)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which local authorities retain a selective secondary school system.

Mr. Dunn: The table shows those local authorities which retained a partially selective secondary school system as at January 1984, the latest date for which firm figures are available. No authority operated a fully selective system.

LEAS maintaining at least one grammar school—January 1984

Local Education Authorities	*Number of Grammar Schools*
Barnet	2
Bexley	2
Bromley	2
Enfield	1
Kingston-upon-Thames	2
Redbridge	2
Sutton	4
Birmingham	8
Walsall	2
Wolverhampton	1
Liverpool	2
Wirral	4
Trafford	8
Calderdale	7
Kirklees	1
Avon	2
Berkshire	6
Buckinghamshire	14
Cumbria	1
Devon	10
Dorset	7
Essex	8
Gloucestershire	11
Hereford and Worcestershire	1
Kent	28
Lancashire	5
Lincolnshire	15
Norfolk	3
North Yorkshire	7
Salop	2
Warwickshire	5
Wiltshire	2

University Places

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of university places available in England and Wales for each year since 1978.

Sir Keith Joseph: Statistics on available places are not collected. The total number of full-time undergraduates and postgraduates at universities in England and Wales since 1978 has been:

	Number
1978	245,300
1979	249,500
1980	254,200
1981	255,200
1982	250,600
1983	246,900
1984*	245,000

* Provisional

School Leavers

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what was the number of school leavers in England and Wales for each year since 1978;

(2) what was the number of school leavers with minimum university qualifications for each year since 1978.

Mr. Dunn: The numbers of school leavers in England in total and with two or more A-level passes are:

School leavers, England

Academic year	*Total leavers* (000s)	*Leavers with two or more A level passes** (000s)
1977-78	724·31	91·13
1978-79	737·37	92·19
1979-80	750·73	94·94
1980-81	733·96	98·78
1981-82	751·13	103·90
1982-83	765·52	106·30
1983-84	752·82	105·80

* Data on school leavers examination attainments are subject to sampling error.
Source: School Leavers Survey.

The figures for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

ENERGY

Plutonium (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish in the *Official Report* his correspondence with the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on the topic of civil and military plutonium.

Mr. Goodlad: I have arranged for copies of this correspondence to be placed in the Library.

Gas Showrooms

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has for the future of gas showrooms arising from his plans to privatise British Gas.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear in his statement on 7 May, we intend to transfer to the new private sector company all the assets of the British Gas Corporation. The future of the gas showrooms will be a matter for the gas corporation —but these activities will of course be subject to review by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Britoil

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations his Department has had from British Petroleum over the possible acquisition by it of the Government's shareholding in Britoil; what discussions have taken place with British Petroleum on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My Department has received no representations.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Development Agency (Holiday Package)

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any public funds, time of public servants, or other public resources have been or are involved in the arrangements for a special holiday package deal at concessionary rates negotiated on behalf of its staff by the Scottish Development Agency with a leisure club in Glasgow.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish Development Agency staff club has arranged with the Holiday Inn Hotel, Glasgow for corporate membership of the hotel's leisure club for agency staff. There are no arrangements whatsoever for any holiday package deal. I am assured by the agency that the scheme is completely financed by staff contribution and that no public resources are involved.

School Leavers

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of school leavers in Scotland for each year since 1978.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

Session	*Number of leavers*
1977-78	93,221
1978-79	91,737
1979-80	91,722
1980-81	87,475
1981-82	88,607
1982-83	90,988
1983-84	89,737

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of school leavers with the minimum university entrance qualifications for each year since 1978; and how many failed to obtain entrance to university in each year.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Generally, the minimum requirement for university entrance is three highers and two O grades (or equivalent): entrance requirements for individual faculties or courses may be higher. The numbers of school leavers with three or more highers were as follows:

Number of school leavers with 3 or more Highers

Session	*Number*
1977-78	16,069
1978-79	15,760
1979-80	16,661
1980-81	17,208
1981-82	18,347
1982-83	18,954
1983-84	n.a.

Information from the Scottish school leavers survey indicates that, of those who left school in 1979-80 with three or more highers, and who applied for university entrance, 67 per cent. entered university in the following session. The corresponding figure for 1981-82 leavers is 61 per cent. The percentages of this group who entered other forms of higher education, or who entered university at a later date, are not readily available.

NHS (Privatisation)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the further plans he has for privatisation within the National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Health Boards were asked to test the cost-effectiveness of their catering, domestic and laundry services by putting them out to competitive tender, and I have had a preliminary discussion about progress with health board chairmen to ensure the delivery of savings.

EMPLOYMENT

Electricity Regulations (Infringement)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers have *(a)* been cautioned and *(b)* been prosecuted, and with what result, for infringement of Regulation 28 of the Electricity Regulations 1908 in each year of the last five years to the nearest convenient date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1981 there was a prosecution for breach of regulation 28 of the Electricity Regulations 1908. The employer was convicted and fined £50. Figures for cautions are not kept centrally and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers have *(a)* been cautioned and *(b)* been prosecuted, and with what results, for infringement of the Electricity (Factories Act) Special Regulations 1908 and 1944 in each of the last five years to the nearest convenient date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of employers prosecuted for infringement of these regulations in 1980-84 inclusive, and the results are included in the following table.

Year	Employers prosecuted	Informations	Convictions	Total fines £
1980	31	66	66	14,050
1981	21	47	47	7,225
1982	32	61	55	12,480
1983	29	56	54	15,500
1984	31	62	61	11,770

Figures for cautions are not kept centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Employment, in the light of the recommendation by the Manpower Services Commission report on the quota scheme that further research should be carried out, what initiative the Government will take; and if he will make a statement on the other recommendations of the report.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Trade Unions (Ballots)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Employment which trade unions have applied to the certification officer for reimbursement of the cost of ballots, under the provisions of section 1 of the Employment Act 1980; what is the size of payments made to each of the trade unions; what is the purpose of the ballots for which payments were sought; and on which dates these payments were made.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The certification officer has provided the following information for the period from the introduction of the scheme on 1 October 1980 up to 13 June this year.

Applicant		Purpose of Ballot(s) (see key below)	Amount of Payment (£)	Date Payment Authorised
Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom	(1)	D	Nil	
	(2)	C	25,692·60	28- 1-83
	(3)	F	42,178·78	10- 6-83
	(4)	B	36,964·59	12- 6-84
	(5)	B	Application under consideration	
Guiness Brewing Staff Association (UK)	(1)	D	Nil	
		C		
British Medical Association	(1)	B (2 ballots)	Nil	
	(2)	B (2 ballots)	Nil	
Professional Association of Teachers	(1)	C	4,068·71	4- 6-81
	(2)	C	4,456·78	10- 6-82
	(3)	C	4,600·83	5- 7-83
	(4)	C (3 ballots)	4,828·81	8- 6-84
	(5)	C	Application under consideration	
Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association	(1)	C	451·14	21- 7-81
	(2)	C	677·57	20- 7-82
	(3)	C	416·15	3- 6-83
	(4)	C (2 ballots)	432·56	23-10-84
British Association of Occupational Therapists Ltd	(1)	B	Nil	
	(2)	A	1,404.63	16-10-81
	(3)	B	2,260·10	8- 9-82
	(4)	B	328·67	2-11-83
	(5)	B	2,016·58	8- 8-84
The Society of Chiropodists	(1)	B	Nil	
	(2)	B	1,189·40	27- 9-82
	(3)	B	1,283·52	1- 8-83
	(4)	B	1,300·93	16- 8-84
Association of Optical Practitioners Ltd	(1)	B (2 ballots)	1,508·33	28- 8-81
	(2)	B (2 ballots)	1,577·05	1-12-82
	(3)	B (2 ballots)	1,385·23	13-11-84
National Association of Head Teachers	(1)	B (2 ballots)	Nil	
	(2)	B	157·55	2-12-82
	(3)	B	164·62	2-12-82
	(4)	B	230·62	13-10-83
	(5)	C	4,200·76	13-10-83
	(6)	B	242·09	24- 1-84

Applicant		*Purpose of Ballot(s) (see key below)*	*Amount of Payment (£)*	*Date Payment Authorised*
Clearing Bank Union	(1)	A	Nil	
	(2)	F	41·16	3- 7-84
Association of Public Service Finance Officers	(1)	B	524·35	23- 9-81
	(2)	B	596·43	22- 9-82
	(3)	B	619·35	16-11-83
	(4)	B	621·28	17-10-84
Coventry Economic Building Society Staff Association	(1)	G	Nil	
Association of Management and Professional Staffs	(1)	B	2,323·07	17-11-81
	(2)	B	1,856·22	25- 8-82
Society of Radiographers	(1)	B	2,654·28	16-12-81
	(2)	B	2,346·42	17- 5-83
	(3)	B	3,411·49	15-11-84
Association of Education Officers	(1)	B (2 ballots)	Nil	
	(2)	B C	206·68	25- 5-83
	(3)	B (2 ballots) C	Nil	
British Actors Equity Association	(1)	D (2 ballots)	Application withdrawn	
Association of Public Service Professional Engineers	(1)	B	386·60	13- 4-82
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy	(1)	B	1,297·97	26- 4-82
	(2)	B	1,443·54	23-11-83
Institute of Journalists	(1)	C	587·53	22- 9-82
	(2)	C	460·36	4-10-83
	(3)	C	518·16	19-10-83
	(4)	C	699·63	21- 8-84
	(5)	C	Application under consideration	
Barclays Group Staff Union	(1)	A	10,941·13	3-11-82
	(2)	F	11,427·24	19- 7-84
	(3)	A	Application under consideration	
Retail Book Stationery and Allied Trades Employees Association	(1)	F (2 ballots)	Nil	
	(2)	F (5 ballots)	1,392·89	2- 8-84
	(3)	F	Application under consideration	
	(4)	F	Application under consideration	
British Orthoptic Society	(1)	C	147·11	17- 5-83
National Association of Fire Officers	(1)	A	176·84	29- 7-83
Immigration Service Union	(1)	B	221·78	4-10-83
	(2)	B C	511·98	22- 2-85
National and Provincial Building Society Staff Association	(1)	E	Application under consideration	
Nat West Staff Association	(1)	F	7,733·93	9- 8-84
Ministry of Defence Staff Association	(1)	B	Application under consideration	
	(2)	A, B	Application under consideration	
	(3)	D	Application under consideration	
Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers—Engineering, Foundry and Construction Section	(1)	C (154 ballots)	1,199,922·19	31- 5-85
	(2)	C (13 ballots) E	Application under consideration	
	(3)	C (14 ballots)	Application under consideration	
Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union	(1)	C (15 ballots)	Application under consideration	
Clerical and Secretarial Staffs Association of the University of Liverpool	(1)	E	Application under consideration	
United Friendly Divisional and District Managers Association	(1)	F	Application under consideration	

Applicant		Purpose of Ballot(s) (see key below)	Amount of Payment (£)	Date Payment Authorised
Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (National Association of the Teachers of Wales)	(1)	A	Application under consideration	

Ballot purposes

A Ballots on strikes or other industrial action.
B Election of members of trade unions' principal executive committees.
C Election of trade union officers.
D Amending trade union rules.
E Trade union merger proposals.
F Ballot on employers' offers on pay and conditions of service.
G Ballots for a purpose outside the scope of the Scheme.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the results of the recent survey of trainees' attitudes to the youth training scheme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Manpower Services Commission conducts a regular survey of youth training scheme leavers. Questionaires are sent to 15 per cent. of ex-trainees some three months after they leave the scheme. The destinations of leavers in the survey are reported monthly. In addition, a detailed report is prepared each quarter. A copy of the latest report covers leavers between July and September 1984, and I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library. It includes a range of information about the attitudes of trainees to the youth training scheme.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were unemployed in the Portsmouth travel-to-work area in 1979 and in 1985; how many unemployed people in 1979 and 1985 were aged under 25 years; and how many of those unemployed in 1979 and 1985 were women.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following is in the Library. Direct comparisons with 1979 are not possible. The following table shows the figures requested for the old Portsmouth travel-to-work area in respect of registrants for April 1979 and claimants for April 1985, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available. Figures are also on both bases for October 1982, when the basis of the unemployment count was changed. Comparisons are also affected by the provisions of the 1983 Budget which mean that certain men aged 60 and over no longer need to sign on at an unemployment benefit office.

Unemployment—old Portsmouth travel-to-work area

Registrants	Total	Under 25 years	Female
April 1979	10,272	3,413	2,891
October 1982	25,551	10,979	7,688
Claimants			
October 1982	24,138	10,431	7,250
April 1985	26,411	10,387	8,610

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people at present registered as unemployed have never had a job.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 9 May 1985 there were 315,669 unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom who had never had a job since leaving school, of which 107,704 were aged under 18 years.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many people at present registered as unemployed have only had a youth training scheme or community programme as their only means of employment.

Mr. Alan Clark Such an analysis of the unemployment count is not available.

Skillcentres (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Employment how many places are currently available at skillcentres in Hampshire; if he can give figures for each; how many vacancies there are at present in skillcentres; and how many people have passed through the skillcentres in each of the past three years, giving individual numbers for each.

Mr. Peter Morrison: For each of the skillcentres in Hampshire the following tables show:

(a) for April 1985 the number of training places made available and the average number of trainees in the centre;

(b) the number of adults who began a course of training in 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85

(a)

Skillcentre	Places (April 1985) Made Available	Occupied
Portsmouth	up to 170	152
Southampton	up to 190	153
Southampton Annex	up to 150	134

(b)

Skillcentre	Adult Trainees (Starts) 1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Portsmouth	298	343	381
Southampton	394	376	849
Southampton Annex	235	329	401

Table *(b)* refers to adults only because information on the numbers of young people trained in the skillcenters is not readily available.

Wood Preservatives

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to the answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *250*, he will list in the *Official Report* the products used as wood preservatives currently known to the Health and Safety Executive to contain lindane, tributyl tin oxide, or both.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1985 c. 567]: As the list is of considerable length I write to the hon. Member with the information; and I will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Quotas

Mr. Maclean asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on the possibility of owner-occupiers being allowed to sell milk quotas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received a representation from the NFU in response to the "Mobility of Quotas" discussion paper (copies of which are available in the Library of the House) that occupiers of dairy farms, whether owner-occupiers or tenants, should be free to sell or buy quota. Other organisations in favour are the Milk Marketing Board, the Tenant Farmers' Association and the Farmers' Union of Wales. The Country Landowners' Association on the other hand is against tenants having the right to sell quota. At present quota can only be transferred with land. We are actively pursuing in Brussels the possibility of more flexible arrangements, but there has been opposition from the Commission (although following our pressure it has agreed to look at the possibilities) and from some other member states. I cannot predict the outcome at this stage.

DDT

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what instances of use of DDT in the United Kingdom in 1985 his Department is aware of; and what action he will take to seek to prevent such use.

Mrs. Fenner: We have no direct evidence of the use of DDT on crops in 1985. Surveys of crops of types on which DDT was used before clearance was withdrawn will be carried out during 1985 as part of the work of the working party on pesticide residues.

Part III of the Food and Environment Protection Bill seeks to provide Ministers with statutory powers not only to prevent the supply and use of non-approved products but also to seize and dispose of stocks where necessary.

Food Labelling

Mr. Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why new guidelines on food labelling require sugar to be included under the general heading of carbohydrates.

Mr. Jopling: Draft guidelines for voluntary full nutrition labelling were issued on 27 March, and would provide the option of declaring one figure for total carbohydrates, or of declaring total carbohydrates plus a separate figure for sugar within that total. All interested bodies were invited to comment, and all comments will be considered before any final decision is reached.

Hayling Island

Mr. Ian Lloyd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what steps he has taken to examine the loss of amenity and environmental damage resulting from the beach protection scheme currently being implemented on Hayling Island;

(2) whether he has called for, received, suggested or costed any proposals designed to restore the amenities hitherto associated with the sand beaches on Hayling Island before the implementation of the beach protection scheme;

(3) whether he will initiate urgent technical discussions, with Havant borough council and other qualified Government bodies to examine whether there is any alternative to the completion of the existing beach protection scheme on Hayling Island, which, within the overall cost limits for that proportion of the scheme yet to be completed, will achieve a more acceptable environment impact;

(4) whether he will allocate further funding, on the same basis as that applying to the current beach protection scheme on Hayling Island, to any suitable scheme designed to restore the amenity value of the beaches on Hayling Island affected by the current beach protection scheme.

Mr. Jopling: In 1983 a scheme was approved for beach replenishment on Hayling Island. If Havant borough council wishes to make proposals for its modification I will consider them. Additionally I have arranged for one of my officials to visit the site and have technical discussion with the borough council about the environmental impact of the scheme.

Aerial Spraying

Mr. Kennedy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent, in granting any recent approvals for use by the Forestry Commission of fenitrothion for blanket aerial spraying, his Department took account of the evidence available to the joint meeting on pesticides residues of the World Health Organisation concerning the veracity of tests conducted into the matter by Industrial Biotests of Chicago.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 7 June 1985, c. 294]: The clearances granted to the Forestry Commission for the use of fenitrothion are not dependent on any tests conducted by Industrial Biotests of Chicago.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what evidence is available to his Department concerning international research, particularly Canadian, into the suitability of fenitrothion for use in blanket aerial spraying; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the categories under which approval has been granted by his Department to the Forestry Commission for the use of fenitrothion for the purposes of blanket aerial spraying; if he will indicate the reasoning for the specific choice of category in each case; and if he will make a statement;

(3) on what basis his Department granted approval for use by the Forestry Commission of fenitrothion for the purposes of blanket aerial spraying.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 7 June 1985, c. 294.]: All clearances granted under the pesticides safety precaution scheme including those for fenitrothion, are based on an objective evaluation of scientific data on toxicity, crop residues and wildlife environmental effects, as outlined in the scheme, the text of which is available in the Library of the House. Additionally, information derived from Canadian research on fenitrothion was considered by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides in 1978. The committee concluded that there was no

evidence of a causal relationship between use of fenitrothion and Reyes syndrome and that United Kingdom clearance conditions did not therefore require amendment. Currently, fenitrothion is cleared for limited use in the United Kingdom, ie on 5,333 hectares of forestry provided stringent conditions are met.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to which countries have banned the use of fenitrothion for the purposes of blanket aerial spraying and as to the reasons for such laws.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 7 June 1985, c. *294*.]: I understand that the use of fenitrothion for aerial spraying is not permitted in certain provinces of Canada because of what was believed to be a possible association between the large scale use of fenitrothion in Canada and Reyes syndrome.

TRANSPORT

Motorway Service Stations

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the annual cost of the inspection carried out by his officials at the Leicester forest east service station on the M1 motorway from May 1979 to 1985;

(2) what was the annual cost of the inspection carried out by his officials at the Toddington service station on the M1 motorway from May 1979 to 1985;

(3) what was the annual cost of the inspection carried out by his officials at the Trowell service station on the M1 motorway from May 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Ridley: The information is not available. Each inspection of a service area takes about a half-day and the cost, including overheads, is approximately £55 excluding travel.

Solvents (Driving Offences)

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to make driving under the influence of solvents a specific criminal offence.

Mrs Chalker: The Road Traffic Act 1972, as amended by the Transport Act 1981, provides that a person is guilty of an offence if he drives or attempts to drive while unfit to do so through drink or drugs. Although the meaning of drug for this purpose is not defined in the Act, the High Court has ruled that solvents can be regarded as a drug and successful prosecutions for driving under the influence of solvents have already been brought under the existing legislation. I therefore do not believe that further legislation is needed.

Driving Test

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to reduce the waiting time that learner motor cyclists have to wait before being able to take their driving test.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend is already doing so. Additional examiners have been recruited and trained to produce a net increase of 36 on a year ago. Substantially more are being recruited in order to reduce the waiting time for L tests, including part II of the test for motor cycles. The average wait for part I of the motor cycle test for the Department remains reasonable, but most learner riders take the part I test with the appointed organisation with which they also take their training.

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list his Department's driving test centres in Kent, together with their establishment of examiners, actual current strengths of examiners, average waiting time for car and motor cycle driving tests for each centre, respectively, and the current national average waiting times for these categories.

Mrs. Chalker: The information requested is:

Waiting Period (Weeks) at 24 May 1985

	Complement	*In post*	*Waiting period (weeks) at 24 May 1985*	
			L tests motor cars & Part II m/c	*Part I m/c tests*
Southern Eastern TA				
Ashford	4	2	24	—
Canterbury Margate	6	6	17	—
Folkestone	4	4	14	—
Gillingham*	6	6	22	—
Gravesend*	4	4	17	—
Herne Bay	4	3	20	—
Maidstone	5	4	17	—
Tunbridge Wells	4	3	21	—
Canterbury HGV	1	1	—	13
Gillingham HGV	2	2	—	14
Metropolitan TA				
Belvedere	6	6	31	—
Bexleyheath*	5	5	30	—
Sevenoaks	4	4	23	—
Sidcup	4	4	29	—
West Wickham*	7	7	30	—

*. The numbers of staff in-post include 2 examiners on long term sick leave at Gillingham and 1 each at Gravesend, Bexleyheath and West Wickham.

The waiting periods nationally are 18½ weeks for L tests and 13 weeks for part I motor cycle tests.

I am filling the vacant posts by transfer of staff or recruitment of extra examiners as quickly as I can.

Sailing Vessels Marques (Loss)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will release to the parents of young persons lost when the Marques sank with all hands the marine survey of the vessel prepared by Mr. John Perryman of Great Yarmouth.

Mr. Ridley: The report prepared by Mr. Perryman will be part of the evidence submitted to the court of inquiry and I would not wish to risk prejudicing the outcome of the investigation by the premature release of documents.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Transport why the inquiry into the loss of the Marques is not being held before January-February 1986.

Mr. Ridley: The date for the public formal investigation has not yet been set. Arrangements for the hearing are being made as expeditiously as possible but a number of factors, such as the selection and appointment by the Lord Chancellor of a senior member of the Admiralty Bar as wreck commissioner and the need for the parties to have time to prepare their cases, have to be considered. Nevertheless, I hope that it will be possible for the investigation to commence before the end of the year.

London Underground (Fire)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the costs of the Oxford Circus fire London Regional Transport are trying to recover through insurance claims; and whether these claims include any claims for damages against other companies.

Mr. Ridley: I understand that LRT is claiming from insurers, all of the costs given in my answer of 10 June at column *386* together with loss of revenue estimated at £0·4 million. It knows of no grounds for claims from other companies.

Heathrow Airport

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of the British Airports Authority, he will discuss its operations in terminal 3 at Heathrow Airport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have no immediate plans to do so, but we keep in close touch with the British Airports Authority about the performance and development of Heathrow.

Drivers (Medical Standards)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to introduce medical standards reflecting the recommendations made by his Advisory Committee on Medical Standards for heavy goods vehicle and public service vehicle licensing; what significant changes in medical standards he proposes to make; whether compensation will be available to those whose employment is terminated through the loss of their driving licence arising from failure to meet higher medical standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The working party on this subject was set up in June 1977 because there was concern both within and outside the Department over the effectiveness of current procedures and inconsistent application of standards at several stages in the licensing process. Its report, which was published in September 1983, basically endorsed the standards recommended by the medical profession but proposed changes in procedures. The Department received comments on these proposals from a number of organisations and has held discussions with some of these.

In reaching conclusions on the proposals, the Government have also taken into account the fact that the study and subsequent debate have increased awareness of the recommended standards and greatly improved the way in which existing arrangements are operated by doctors and by the licensing authorities in the traffic areas. Revised licence application and medical report forms are proving much more effective in identifying cases requiring medical investigation.

In these circumstances I am not proposing regulations, as was advocated by the working party, to extend the list of conditions which would bar the grant of a vocational (heavy goods or public service vehicle) driver's licence. There are no plans to alter the present procedure under which it is for the applicant to obtain and submit a medical report when this is required. Nor will there be a specialist panel to give advice on appeals against decisions taken by the licensing authorities on medical grounds.

There is a need for continuing advice on policy in relation to the conditions which are most often responsible for collapse at the wheel. A panel, now chaired by Dr. Christopher Earl, has for many years advised on diseases of the nervous system as they affect driving. My right hon. Friend has appointed two similar honorary advisory panels, one chaired by Professor Michael Oliver to advise on cardio-vascular conditions, and the other chaired by Dr. David Pyke to advise on diabetes.

The Government accept the recommendations that the duration of heavy goods vehicle drivers' licences should be five years, as for public service vehicle drivers, and that the driving test to establish a licence-holder's continued fitness after developing a limb disability should be free of charge: the necessary parliamentary legislation will be introduced at the next opportunity. When it comes into effect, the age after which heavy goods vehicle drivers have to submit a fresh medical report on renewal will come down from 60 to 46, as it now is for public service vehicle drivers.

I share the concern expressed to me by organisations representing both sides of the road transport industry, and by others, about the position of those who have to give up vocational driving in mid-career for medical reasons. This is not a new problem, but it occurs more widely to the extent that medical standards designed to protect road-users from the consequences of collapse at the wheel are being more effectively applied. It may be that the provisions of insurance schemes which exist in the industry can be improved in this direction, and be more generally adopted. But such issues will need to be dealt with through the normal employer-employee procedures.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Single Homeless (Hartlepool)

Mr. Leadbitter asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single homeless people are registered in Hartlepool for social security allowances; and how many will be disqualifiable under any time rule applied to the nature of their accommodation.

Mr. Whitney: I assume the hon. Member is referring to single supplementary benefit claimants who live in board and lodging accommodation. When cases were examined following the introduction of new regulations effective from 29 April 1985, 219 claimants in the Hartlepool area were single boarders. Of these 107 were subject to a limit of four weeks following which, although they would not be disqualified, they would no longer be eligible to be treated as boarders in that area for supplementary benefit purposes.

Elderly Persons

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of people of *(a)* 65 to 75 years of age and *(b)* 75 years and over living in Lancashire in each of the years 1979 to 1985; and what was the percentage increase over that period.

Mr. John Patten: The latest information available is as follows:

Mid-year	Lancashire: Resident Population Aged 65 to 74	75 and over
(i) Estimated number		
1979	145,900	88,400
1980	144,500	91,900
1981	142,600	93,300
1982	139,200	95,200
1983	132,900	96,100
(ii) Percentage change		
1979-83	−8·9	+8·7

Statutory Sick Pay Scheme

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated extra cost in terms of supplementary benefit and housing benefit of extending statutory sick pay to 28 weeks.

Mr. Whitney: It is not expected that there will be any significant increase in the numbers claiming supplementary benefit and housing benefit as a result of extending statutory sick pay to 28 weeks.

Ms. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the extra annual cost in terms of supplementary benefit and housing benefit of the eight week statutory sick pay scheme.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is not available. Statistics of those receiving both statutory sick pay and housing benefit are not collected. Supplementary benefit statistics provide information of claimants getting sick pay from an employer but do not differentiate between occupational sick pay and SSP.

Housing Benefit

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people are now receiving housing benefit in the London borough of Lambeth giving separate certificated and standard benefits and rent rebate, rate rebate and housing allowance;

(2) what payments have been made by his Department to Lambeth council for rate rebates in 1984-85 and since 1 April.

Mr. Whitney: Firm figures on the number of people now receiving housing benefit are not available, but the London borough of Lambeth estimates that in 1985-86 the numbers receiving rent rebate, rent allowance and rate rebates would be:

	Rent rebate	Rent allowance	Rate rebate
Certificated	18,000	17,000	38,000
Standard	10,000	8,000	25,000

Lambeth was paid subsidy of £24·6 million by this Department for rate rebates awarded in 1984-85. No payments of rate rebate subsidy have been made to Lambeth since 1 April since rate rebates are not payable under the housing benefits scheme when an authority has not set a rate.

Pensioners

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has issued guidance to local authorities on meeting the needs of pensioners from ethnic minority groups.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our social services inspectorate seeks to stimulate an awareness in local social services authorities of the special needs of ethnic minority groups. During May 1985 a copy was sent to each social services department of a report "Triple Jeopardy: growing old in a second homeland", which had been commissioned from the Centre for Policy and Ageing by our Department. Our centrally funded initiative, "Helping the Community to Care", includes a number of schemes designed to provide knowledge and guidance for voluntary organisations on ways of meeting the needs of elderly members of the ethnic minority communities.

Residential Homes

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people between the ages of *(a)* 65 and 75 years and *(b)* 75 years and over, were, in Lancashire, living in residential care homes for the elderly in each of the following sectors (i) voluntary; (ii) private and (iii) public in each of the years 1979 to 1985.

Mr. John Patten: The available information on the numbers of elderly and disabled residents is given in the table:

Number of residents

As at 31 March	Statutory homes		Voluntary homes		Private homes		All homes	
	Aged		Aged		Aged		Aged	
	65-74	75+	65-74	75+	65-74	75+	65-74	75+
1979	(3475)*		85	520	202	939	NA	NA
1980	614	2,985	78	512	168	1,046	860	4,543
1981	641	2,957	69	535	266	1,413	976	4,905
1982	584	3,085	81	464	251	1,603	916	5,152
1983	578	2,989	83	442	289	2,012	950	5,443
1984	540	3,021	80	458	357	2,751	977	6,230
†1985	520	2,992	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

* Further breakdown not available.
† Provisional.
NA Not yet available.

Mr. Peter Sutcliffe

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what special privileges for good behaviour are being afforded to Peter Sutcliffe, a patient at Broadmoor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) yesterday.

Welfare Rights Officers

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many welfare rights officers are currently employed by social services departments in England and as to the distribution of such welfare rights officers by county.

Mr. John Patten: Such information is not collected centrally.

Junior Doctors

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Trent regional health authority has dropped the allowance for continuity of care in a junior doctor's contract.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The assessment of a junior doctor's contractual commitments is a matter for local judgment by the employing authority in the light of the requirements of each post including, where appropriate, such commitments outside normally rostered duties as are necessary for the continuity of patient care. If the hon. Member has a particular problem in mind, he may wish to write to the chairman of Trent regional health authority.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the regional health authorities who are paying their junior doctors for an 84 hour week except when covering for a colleague who is on holiday, irrespective of the number of hours worked in excess of that time;

(2) if his Department's circular (PM(85)1) regarding pay and conditions of service of junior hospital medical and dental staff; hours of work, is being used by some regional health authorities to reduce the remuneration of junior house officers by not paying them for time worked in excess of 84 hours per week.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A junior doctor cannot be obliged to undertake unpaid duty in excess of his contractual commitment other than, exceptionally, in occasional emergencies or unforeseen circumstances. Where he agrees to undertake duty in excess of this commitment, he is entitled to receive additional pay or, in the limited circumstances envisaged in PM(85)1, time off in lieu. I have no evidence that these arrangements are not being followed, but I should be happy to consider any that the hon. Member can provide.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards junior house officers in future working more than 84 hours a week except when covering for a colleague who is on holiday.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 23 May to the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) at columns *538-9*.

Abortions

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* those hospitals in the Greater London area which are equipped to perform abortions; how many beds each unit has; what is the latest average gestation period of weeks at which abortions are performed; and how many staff are employed in each unit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The following private hospitals and nursing homes in the Greater London area are approved by our Department under Section 1(3) of the Abortion Act:

	Approved beds
Gordon Hospital	3
Leigham Private Clinic	29
London Private Hospital	50
Marie Stopes Nursing Home	13
New Cross Nursing Home	13
New Victoria Hospital	2
Park View Clinic	30
Raleigh Nursing Home	19
Rosslyn Nursing Home	37
Royal Masonic Hospital	4

We do not hold information centrally about the total numbers of staff employed in these places, or about facilities for abortions or related staff in NHS hospitals. In 1983, the average gestation period at which abortions were carried out was 10·5 weeks. This includes abortions carried out on resident and non-resident women.

Note

For this purpose, the Greater London area covers those health districts falling wholly or partly within the boundaries of the Greater London council.

Supplementary Benefit (Earnings Limit)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the earnings limit for those in receipt of supplementary benefit was last increased; what is the current earnings limit; what the present limit would now be if it had been increased in line with inflation from the date of the last increase; if he will now take steps to increase the limit; what reasons he advanced previously for not increasing the limit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is as follows:

Claimant group	*Present level of disregard*	*Date increased to present level*	*Level needed if increased in line with inflation since last increase**
Unemployed	£4	November 1980	£5·46
Single parents	£4 plus half of earnings between £4 and £20	November 1980	£5·46 – £27·28
Others	£4	November 1975	£10·37

* Based on increase in Retail Price Index between date of last increase and April 1985 (latest date for which information is available).

We have not increased earnings disregards since the dates shown because we have taken the view that any additional resources available should be used to improve the scale rates for all recipients rather than to increase the earnings disregards of those beneficiaries who have earnings. In the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" we have put forward our proposals for improving the structure of the earnings disregards for certain groups of claimants.

Thames Regional Health Authority

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Chipping Barnet on 6 June, *Official Report*, column *241*, if he will give details of the 1982 boundary changes relating to the individual Thames regional health authority areas and the percentage real increase in revenue expenditure between 1978-79 and 1984-85 in each Thames area notwithstanding the boundary changes.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In 1982 part of the Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster area health authority in North-West Thames region was transferred to North-East Thames region and included in the district of Bloomsbury. The borough of Spelthorne was transferred from South-West Thames region to North-West Thames region and included in the district of Hounslow and Spelthorne.

In addition to these boundary changes, there was a major restructuring of the boards of governors for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals which had implications for the Thames regions. Bloomsbury district in North-East Thames region now manages the Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear hospitals, the Royal National Orthopaedic hospitals and St. Peter's hospitals. West Lambeth district in South-East Thames region now manages St. John's hospital for diseases of the skin. All other former boards of governors hospitals are now special health authorities. The Hammersmith hospital was removed from its local district in North-West Thames region and made an SHA.

The table gives the percentage increase in revenue expenditure in each Thames regional health authority and in the London postgraduate special health authorities between 1978-79 and 1984-85, after taking account of general inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator. The figures take no account of the boundary changes and changes in management responsibility I have listed.

Percentage Real Increase in Revenue Expenditure 1978-79 to 1984-85*

Region	*per cent.*
North-West Thames	4·1
North-East Thames	18·8
South-East Thames	9·6
South-West Thames	9·2
Boards of Governors/SHAs	11·3

* Percentages are based on actual revenue expenditure from health authorities' summarised accounts for 1978-79; and on provisional outturn figures for 1984-85.

Fuel Deposits (Assistance)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what instructions have been issued to local offices of his Department regarding assistance to claimants who are asked to pay deposits in respect of supplies of electricity or gas.

Mr. Whitney: A single payment of supplementary benefit to prevent the disconnection of a fuel supply may be made under regulation 30 of the single payment regulations where in the adjudication officer's opinion such a payment is the only means by which to prevent serious damage or serious risk to health or safety. Guidance issued by the Chief Adjudication Officer on the application of regulation 30 in cases of threatened disconnection is published in paragraphs 7556-7558 of the "S Manual"—a copy of which is in the Library.

Local Office Staffs

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he has taken to ensure that those local offices of his Department which serve substantial ethnic minority communities employ staff who originate from those minorities; if he is satisfied that staff in such offices can readily secure the assistance of full-time, salaried interpreters; if he is satisfied with the present proportion of counter staff in local offices of his Department who come from the ethnic minorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: As the hon. Member may know, the Civil Service as a whole does not at present have records of the ethnic origins of its staff. I am not, therefore, in a position to answer fully the questions the hon. Member has raised.

Recently the Civil Service undertook a pilot scheme to monitor the ethnic origins of all staff in the north-west planning area and the county of Avon. Following evaluation of the results of these surveys, my hon. Friend the Minister for the Civil Service announced in January of this year that ethnic monitoring was to be extended to the rest of the civil service on a phased basis over the next three years. When this information is available detailed analyses will be possible.

I can, however, deal with the question of interpreters. Local offices operating in areas with substantial ethnic minorities will normally, through local recruitment, have a pool of bilingual staff to call on where necessary. In addition local office managers have the facility to engage professional interpreters and translators on an ad hoc basis where they encounter particular problems or difficulties.

Pension Rights

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether Government proposals regarding transferability of pension rights will cover company pensions which have already been frozen following an individual's early retirement.

Mr. Whitney: The provisions of part II of schedule 1A which would be inserted into the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 by the Social Security Bill currently before Parliament are intended to apply only to a member of an occupational pension scheme whose pensionable service terminates after those provisions come into effect, which is expected to be 1 January 1986.

Benefit Payments

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the limits laid down by his Department above which Girocheques issued are payable only through a bank; how these limits are determined; whether they are applied by all local offices of his Department; and when they were last updated.

Mr. Whitney: The amount above which Girocheques issued by the Department are crossed is £150. The level at which Girocheques should be crossed is determined in conjunction with National Girobank and the Post Office. The level is subject to periodical review at which account is taken of *(a)* the number of payments of benefit above a given level; and *(b)* the need to protect both the beneficiary and the Department from fraudulent encashment of large amounts. All local offices of the Department apply the £150 crossing limit; which took effect from December 1981 and is currently under review.

Legionnaire's Disease (Inquiry)

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will announce the names of the two further members of the independent committee of inquiry looking into the outbreak of legionnaire's disease in Stafford.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am pleased to announce that Mr. Christopher Holland QC will be the lawyer member of the inquiry team and will act as vice chairman. Professor Patrick O'Sullivan, chair of architectural sciences, University of Wales, Institute of Science and Technology, Cardiff will be the engineer member.

Pensions

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his estimates of the numbers of people expected to receive additional component under the state earnings related pension scheme in the tax years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; what is the maximum estimated additional component; and what is the estimated average additional component in those years.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 June 1985, c. *245*]: I regret that a figure provided in respect of the weekly amount of net additional component was incorrect. The entry should have read:

Estimated weekly amounts of net additional component*

	Maximum £	*Average* £
1985-86	19·50	1·85
1986-87	23·77	2·20
1987-88	28·55	2·65

* After deduction of any guaranteed minimum pension(s) from contracted-out occupational pension scheme(s).

Child Accident Statistics

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if any changes have been made in the collection of child accident statistics since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 June 1985, c. *234*]: There have not been any changes since 1979 in the collection of such statistics in the Department, which are limited to sample information on hospital in-patients and to mortality data, both held at the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys.

The steering group on health services information examined accident statistics in general as part of its review of information about hospital clinical activity in the National Health Service. Its recommendations on the subject were published in 1982 in the group's first report. The group recommended that accident and emergency departments with computerised information systems should collect more detailed information on patients seen. For all patients who are admitted to hospitals after an accident, the group has recommended the use of the 'E' codes of the ninth revision of the international classification of diseases which record the direct physical cause of an accident and where it occurred. Health authorities have been asked to plan on the basis that this and other recommendations in the first report should be implemented by April 1987.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money the Health Education Council has spent on child accident prevention campaigns each year since 1979 in constant terms.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 June 1985, c. *234*.]: Expenditure at 1985 pay and price levels has been:

	£
1979-80	—
1980-81	1,453
1981-82	*357,811
1982-83	986
1983-84	2,733
1984-85	79,734

* Primarily for the 'Play It Safe' campaign.

Drug Addicts

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what National Health Service facilities are available in Sussex for the treatment of drug addicts.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 June 1985, c. *367*.]: The Herbert home clinic in Brighton provides a specialist outpatient clinic, and there is access to six inpatient beds in Brighton. Services for drug misusers may also be provided by primary health care teams or by the general psychiatric services. I shall be publishing a summary of health authorities existing services and plans for developing these shortly.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 80**

SESSION 1984–85

3rd June—14th June 1985

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There will, however, be headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one will find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

Aberdeen University 446-7w
Student grants 446-7w

Abortion 429w, (07.06.85) 606
Greater London 588w
Health services 429w
Hospital beds 588w
NHS 429w
Woodkillers 1010
Young people 428-9w

Abortion counselling 428-9w

Abortions
Hospital patients 431w

Accidents
Children 592w
Fairgrounds 353w
Pesticides 56w
Statistics 592w

Accountability
Metropolitan Police 432-3
Police 432

Accounting
Family practitioner committees 94-5w
Small businesses 134w

Acheson Report 234w

Acid rain
Central Electricity Generating Board 294w
Environment protection 294w
Power stations 318w
Trees 532-3w

Acquittals
Shoplifting 426

Adjudication officers 229w

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 322
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 546-7, 554, 557, 559, 571, 574, 586
Coaches, Accidents (10.06.85) 639
Property development, Dorset (12.06.85) 985-8, 992
Questions
Animal cruelty 207w
British Rail, Locomotives 624
Buses, Greater London 413w
Business statement 443
Channel crossing, Tenders 374w
Elderly, Population distribution 99-100w
Elderly, Scotland 80-1w
Leukaemia, Age distribution 285w
Local education authorities 417-9w
Natural radioactivity 268w
Natural radioactivity, Health hazards 543-4w
Natural radioactivity, Scotland 273-4w
Nuclear power stations, Ministers domestic visits 10-2
Nuclear power stations, Pollution monitoring 269w
Part-time employment 405w
Prime Minister official engagements 512w
Private Members bills 195w
Shoplifting 426
Tourist industry, Regional planning & development 301

Administrative costs
European Commission 499w
Supplementary benefits 364w
VAT 294w

Administrative delays
Attendance allowance 475-7w
Council house sales 517w
Crown courts 633-4
Driving tests 367w
Mobility allowance 475-7w
Remand in custody 207w
Rights of way 410w
Special education 506w

Adult education 257w
Inner London Education Authority 42w

Adult literacy & basic skills unit 257w

Advertising
London Regional Transport 629
Pirate radio stations 96-7w

Advisory Board for the Research Councils 510w

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs 283w

Advisory services
Forestry Commission 414w
Small businesses 177w

Aerospace industry 177w
Northern Ireland 85-6w

Africa
Disaster relief 638
Food aid 436-7
Food aid from EC 195w

African National Congress 220w
South Africa 220w

Age distribution
Leukaemia 285w

Age participation rates 25-6w, 28w, 328-30w
Further education 328-30w

Agnes Street, Carrickfergus 245-6w

Agricultural Development & Advisory Services 291w, 468w, 518w
Costs 291w

Agricultural Inspectorate 56w

Agricultural land
Tree felling 444w

Agricultural machinery
Finance 445w
Scotland 445w

Agricultural marketing
Expenditure 289w

Agricultural research
Northern Ireland 468w
Pesticide residues 422w

Agricultural services
Scotland 445w

Agricultural subsidies
Beef & veal 87w

Agricultural support systems
Expenditure 422w

Agricultural surpluses
EC external trade 518-9w

Agricultural workers
Wales 537-8w

Agriculture
Bilateral aid 558-9w

Aid financed trade
Finance 558w
Manufactured goods 565w

Aids for handicapped
Local government social services 477w
Manpower Services Commission 171-2w

Air fares 621
Western Europe 621-2

Air pollution
Exhaust emissions 314w
Fossil Fuels 313w
Nitrogen oxide 313w
Sulphur dioxide 314w, 457w
Trees 350w

Air pollution control
Gifts & endowments 318w
Health & Safety Executive 171w

Air routes
Australia 197w
Kuala Lumpur 301-2w
Northern Ireland 530w, 538w
Philippine Airlines 196w

Air safety
Testing 150w

Air transport
Competition 621-2
Eastern Europe 622
France 622
Western Europe 622-3

Air transport competition 621-2

Air travel
Heathrow 266w

Airbus Industrie 176w
Company management 176w

Aircraft noise
STOLport 269w

Airline staff
Immigration controls 205w

Airlines 196w
EC action 157w
Far East 196-7w
Heathrow 266w
Manchester Airport 529w

Airports
Falkland Islands 141, 161w
London docklands 52w
Ministerial statements (05.06.85) 307-29
Northern Ireland 539w
Privatisation 539w
Scotland 348w

"Airports Policy White Paper (05.06.85) 307-29, 530w

Aish & Company 145w
Defence procurement 145w

Aitken, Mr Jonathan
Questions
Intelligence services, Ombudsman 211-2w

Al Fayed Investment Holdings 569w
Finance 569w

Alachlor
Weedkillers 88w

Alexander, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Wages councils (06.06.85) 518-20
Questions
British Rail, Land acquisition 197-8w

Alternative energy
Energy forecasting 526w
Energy research 525-6w
Expenditure 526w
Government grants 525w

Alton, Mr David
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 550
Football hooliganism (11.06.85) 871-2
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 27
Local Government (Proportional Representation), Motion to introduce Bill negatived (04.06.85) 156-8
Motion to introduce Bill negatived (04.06.85) 156-61
Water pollution, Norman Shaw Building (06.06.85) 452
Young people (11.06.85) 814, 820, 825-31
Questions
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 438, 997
Defence arms control unit 147w
Forestry grant scheme 414w
Industrial energy conservation 170w
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper," Costs 362w
Sportsgrounds, Football 428-9

Aluminium
Water supply 314-6w

Alzheimers Disease Society 5w

Amateur radio
Licensing 326w

Ambulance services
Gwynedd Health Authority (07.06.85) 600, 603
Public petitions (07.06.85) 600, 603

American Airlines 529w

American Medical International 107w

Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 311
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1063-4
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 779-82

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc
Members of Parliament (Minimum Age) Bill, 1R (06.06.85) 459
Questions
A127, Road signs 628-9
Land registration, Computer applications 127w
Non-tariff barriers, EC internal trade 178w
Road signs, Basildon 372w

Ammunition
Northern Ireland 553w

Amnesties 425

Amnesty International
Tamils 282w

AMS 382w

Anaesthetics
Childbirth 434w

Analgesics
Reyes syndrome 182w

Ancient woodlands 54-5w, 446w, 561-2w
Capital transfer tax 561-2w

Ancram, Mr Michael, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary Scottish Office*
Debates etc
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 72, 73, 103, 108-12
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 337, 345-50, 366-9, 376, 377, 378, 380-1
Questions
Airports, Scotland 348w
Friarton Young Offenders Institution, Self-mutilation 350w
Friarton Young Offenders Institution, Suicide 349-50w
Housing Defects Act 1984, Departmental publications 349w
Legal aid, Scotland 446w
Local government expenditure, Fife Regional Council 135w
Macrae, William, Death 533w
Natural radioactivity, Scotland 273-4w
Prison sentences, Women 80w
Rate rebates, Scotland 252w, 351w
Rateable value, Scotland 414-5w
Rating revaluations, Publicity 252w
Rating revaluations, Scotland 252w
Remand in custody, Women 79w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Debates etc
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 795-7
Questions
Trade missions, South Africa 565-8w
"Victims Against Terrorism" 408w

Anglo-Irish talks 1003-4

Angola
Human rights 76w
Refugee camps 170w

Animal cruelty 128w, 207w
Animal experiments 214w
Laboratories 302w
Sports 304w

Animal experiments 207w, 302w
Animal cruelty 214w
Draize test 86w

Animal fighting 304w
Prosecutions 209w, 304w

Animal welfare 128w, 519w

Animal reports 227-8w

Antenatal clinics 232w

Antifouling paints 457w
Sailing boats 457w

Antismoking campaign
Members 180-1w
Publicity 180-1w

Appeals
Prescriptions 549-50w
Production quotas 421-2w

Apprentices
Devonport Dockyard 503w
Training 503w
Vacancies 293

Appropriation (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (05.06.85) 382-413

Arab boycott 488w
Israel 487-8w

Arafat, Yasser 307w, 408w
Speeches 408w

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Questions
Kinsale gas pipeling 468w
Land drainage, Lough Ross 554w
Mater Hospital, Development plans 246w
Sinn Fein 998
Sites of special scientific interest, Northern Ireland 368w
Wetlands, Northern Ireland 539-40w

Areas of outstanding natural beauty
Armed forces training 258w

Armagh Prison 153w, 368-9w
Body searches 153w, 368-9w
Departmental publications 153w

Armed forces 147
British citizenship 139, 145
Resignations 146-7
Riot control weapons 423w

Armed forces civilians
British citizenship 139, 145

Armed forces deployment 63w
Berlin 76-7w

Armed forces local overseas allowance 144-6

Armed forces medical services
Complaints 424w

Armed forces officers
El Salvador 77w
Prosecution 295-6w

Armed forces strength 149w

Armed forces training
Areas of outstanding natural beauty 258w
Chile 407w
Defence land 257-8w
Dogs 60-1w
Republic of Ireland 149w
Stainmore 503w

Armed forces visits 423-4w
Chile 423-4w

Arms control
Chemical weapons 502w
Departmental coordination 138

Arms control treaties (06.06.85) 537-44, (07.06.85) 613-20
Chemical weapons 148, 307w

Arms embargoes
Chile 409w

Arms exports 259w
Chile 259w, 407w

Arnold, Mr Tom
Questions
Aid financed trade, Finance 558w
House renovation grants, Stockport 563w
Lear Fan, Company liquidations 85-6w
Manchester Airport, Airlines 529w
Ordnance Survey, Income 315w

Arrests
Northern Ireland 83w
Terrorism 22w

Art works
Castle Howard 501-2w

Arthur Andersen 531w

Artificial sweeteners 130w
Diet & disease 106w

Arts
Government grants 169w

Arts Council (06.06.85) 458-9

Arts finance
Local government reform 357w
Standing Order No 10 applications (06.06.85) 458-9

Arts sponsorship 7-8w

Arwen 37 antiriot guns 84w, 302w, 423w

Asbestos
Divis flats 245-6w
Faslane 50-1w, 124w, 200w, 203w
Import controls 326-7w
Imports 325-6w
Northern Ireland 245-6w
Safety standards 326-7w
Waste disposal 879-81

Asbestos cement 317-8w, 325-6w
Imports 317-8w

Ashby, Mr David
Debates etc
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 250
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 26
Questions
Civil service, Pay 18
Judges 634

Ashdown, Mr Paddy
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 938, 956-9
Food & Environment Protection Bill (HL), Rep (10.06.85) 694-5, 701, 702-3, 705, 707, 711-2, 720
Wages councils (06.06.85) 526-8
Water pollution, Norman Shaw Building (05.06.85) 374-5, (06.06.85) 455-6
Questions
Apprentices, Vacancies 293
Armed forces, Resignations 146-7
Arms exports, Chile 259w
Conferences, USA 416w
Data Protection Act 1984, Local government 442w
Defence, Technology transfer 565w
Export controls, Strategic Defence Initiative 451w
Export controls, Technology transfer 451-2w
Export controls, USA 451w
Export licensing, Criminal proceedings 499w
IBM, Restrictive trade practices 452w, 503w
Licensing, Northern Ireland Office 241-5w
Motorways, Road works 265w
Nuclear power stations, Power station closures 462w
Small businesses, Tax reforms 173w
Social security abuse, Departmental form 181w
Social security abuse, Police 226w
Social security abuse, Police records 181w
Treasury, Members correspondence 293w
Trident, Costs 305w
Trident missiles, Nuclear weapons tests 467w
USA, Export controls 407-8w
Warsaw Pact Explosives 64w

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Debates etc
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 29
Handicapped (10.06.85) 655, 658-63
Social security (03.06.85) 44
Questions
British Overseas Trade Board, Trade fairs 454w
Hospitals, Food hygiene 737
Infectious diseases, Health service staff 226-7w
Infectious diseases, Hospitals 227-8w

Infectious diseases, Inquiries 226w
land reclamation, Government grants 459w
Nursing homes, Licensing 544w
Residential care, Local authorities 545w
Residential care, Supplementary benefits 544-5w
Reyes syndrome, Analgesics 182w
Reyes syndrome, Death 182-3w
Reyes syndrome, Northern Ireland 181w, 183w
Television programmes, Deaf 210w

Association of British Travel Agents 262-3w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 262-3w

Association of Chief Police Officers 281w

Association of HM Inspectors of Taxes 249w

Association of Metropolitan Authorities 291w, 310w, 375w, 392w 460w, 543w, 564w

Aston University 752

Atkins, Rt Hon Sir Humphrey
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 920-4, (13.06.85) 1098, 1099

Atkins, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 910, 918, 950-1, 974, 976
(13.06.85) 1042
Questions
Aerospace industry 177w
European fighter aircraft 146w

Atkinson, Mr David
Questions
M3, Road construction 374-5w
Private rented housing 456w

Atkinson, Mr Norman
Questions
Metropolitan Police, Accountability 432
Skillcentres 748

Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary 193w

Attendance allowance 551-2w
Administrative delays 475-7w
Automatic credit transfer 223w
Costs 223w
Social security reviews 551-2w
Wales 477w

Attorney-General
House of Commons questions 1-2w

Audit
European Commission 499w
Small businesses 134w

Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England & Wales
Local government expenditure 458w

Auld Committee see Shops Act 1950 Committee of Inquiry

Australia
Air routes 197w

Autism
Mental health services 184w
West Midlands 184w

Automatic credit transfer 223w
Attendance allowance 223w

Average earnings 301w
Shipbuilding 453-4w
Social security recipients 360w

A1 371w
Road safety barriers 371w

A38 530w
Road safety barriers 530w

A20 156w

A127 628
Road signs 628-9
Road works 628

A303 303w

Back pain
Nurses 473w

Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth, Minister for Local Government
Questions
Coal mining, Environment protection 459w
Dept of the Environment, Government grants to voluntary organisations 46-8w
Greater London Council, By elections 457w
Greater London Enterprise Board, Finance 51w
Household surveys 412w
Inner London Education Authority, Adult education 42w
Land drilling, Petroleum 876-7
Land reclamation, Government grants 459w
Local government expenditure 891-2
Local government expenditure, Capital investment 458w
Local government reform, Computer applications 36-7w
Local government reform, Computers 563-4w
Local government reform, Greater London Council 317w
Local government reform, Information technology 38w
Local government reform, Redundancy 36w
Local government reform, Residuary bodies 35-8w, 159-61w, 316w, 461w, 564-5w
Northern region, Economic situation 458w
Rate limitation, Publicity 456w
Rate rebates, Social security recipients 459w
Refuse disposal, Privatisation 458w
Residuary bodies, Public appointments 515w
Urban programme 48w, 459w
Urban programme, Expenditure 517-8w

Baker, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1045
Property development, Dorset (12.06.85) 989-90
Questions
House of Commons procedure 14-5

Balance of trade
Manufactured goods 298
Philippines 15-6w

Baldry, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 763, 792-3
Wages councils (06.06.85) 499, 501, 511, 515
Questions
Africa, Food aid 436-7
Central ordnance depots 145w
Dept of Employment, Cash limits 123w
Ethiopia, Food aid 635
Ethiopia, Lorries 558w
Open tech, Upper Waiting Hall 520w
Skillcentres 748-9
Youth training scheme 123w, 400w

Ballyhalbert
Primary education 153w

Bananas
EC aid 222w
Nicaragua 222w

Bank of England
Redundancy 440-1w

Bankruptcy
Northern Ireland 82w

Banks
Social security payments 591w
USA 488w

Banks, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 908

Banks, Tony 437

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Immigration controls (14.06.85) 1194
Prime Ministers question time intervention (06.06.85) 437
Young people (11.06.85) 826, 841
Young people, Newham (03.06.85) 127-30, 132, 134
Questions
Computers in government departments, Dept of the Environment 53w, 127w
Crown suppliers, Motor vehicles 32w
Demonstrations, Trafalgar Square 216w
Dept of the Environment, Government grants to voluntary organisations 46-8w
Falkland Islands Development Corporation 559-60w
Falkland Islands Development Corporation, Investment 560w
Greater London Council 514w
Greater London Council, By elections 457w
Greater London Council, Computers 515w
Greater London Council, Council housing 35-6w
Greater London Council, Debts 411-2w
Greater London mobility scheme 52-3w
Hazardous Waste Inspectorate 269w, 516w
Hazardous Wastes 516w
House renovation grants 42w
Land acquisition 49w
Local government reform 53-4w, 564w
Local government reform, Arts finance 357w
Local government reform, Block grant 564w
Local government reform, Civil service manpower 4-5w, 34w
Local government reform, Computer applications 36-7w
Local government reform, Costs 515w
Local government reform, Councillors 514w
Local government reform, Disclosure of information 515w
Local government reform, Greater London Council 317w, 352w, 411w, 437
Local government reform, Information technology 38w
Local government reform, Redundancy 36w, 352w
Local government reform, Residuary bodies 35-8w, 316w, 564-5w
London docklands, Owner occupied housing 53w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Land values 53w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Owner occupied housing 323w
London Regional Transport, One person operation 373-4w
Meals on wheels, Newham 236w
NHS, Privatisation 543w
Old peoples homes, Greater London 544w
Police, Newham 498w
Prisoners, Crimes of violence 498-9w
Rate limitation, London boroughs 515w
Rent acts 48w
Residential care, Greater London 545-6w
Residuary bodies, Public appointments 515w
Retirement pensions, Newham 236w
Roads, Greater London 4w
Royal Festival Hall 43w
Royal parks 42-4w
Social security recipients, Newham 235-6w
Sportsgrounds, Football 430
Successor authorities 515w
Successor authorities, Public appointments 515w
Transport of radioactive materials, Nuclear fuels 2w
Unemployment, Newham 522w
Unemployment benefits, Newham 236w
Urban programme 48w
Youth training scheme, Newham 521-2w
Youth unemployment 199-200w, 522w
Youth unemployment, Newham 199w, 522w

Barley
Viruses 30w

Barnacle geese 412w

Barnett, Mr Guy
Debates etc
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 770, 786-8
Questions
Bilateral aid, Agriculture 558-9w

Barnsley Hospital 432w
Hospital waiting lists 432w

Barristers
Solicitors (11.06.85) 755-60

Barron, Mr Kevin
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 318
Wages councils (06.06.85) 514
Questions
Amateur radio, Licensing 326w
NATO ministerial meetings 148w
Wages councils, Youth employment 746

Basic education 257w

"Basic Facts on Spanish Accession" 528-9w

Basildon
Road signs 372w

Bath City Council Bill (HL) 1984/85
(06.06.85) 423
3R order read (04.06.85) 137, (05.06.85) 285
Royal assent (13.06.85) 1067

Bathgate
British Leyland 292

Baton rounds
Injuries 152w, 247w
Northern Ireland 84w, 246-7w

Batteries
Import penetration 177w

BBC external services 555w

Beaches
Leisure facilities 579-80w

Beausire, William 75w

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc
Contraceptives, Public petitions (07.06.85) 606
Elderly (06.06.85) 466, 469, 475-81, 486, 491
Rolls-Royce, Press releases (04.06.85) 155, (05.06.85) 306
Questions
Employers statutory sick pay scheme 546w
Employers statutory sick pay scheme, Costs 585w
Industrial noise, EC law 522-3w
Lipotriad 481w
Supplementary benefits, Board and lodging charges 546-7w

Bed & breakfast accommodation
Doctors list of patients 427-8w
Homelessness 267w

Bedwas
Skimmed milk powder 131w

Beef & veal
Agricultural subsidies 87w

Beer 134w

Beggs, Mr Roy
Questions
Agricultural research, Northern Ireland 468w
Beef & veal, Agricultural subsidies 87w
Cereals, Intervention stocks 87w
Government assistance to industry, Northern Ireland 553w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Testing 246w
Standard Telephones & Cables, Northern Ireland 999-1000

Beith, Mr A J
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 550, 552-3, 570, 572, 575
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 254-6
Water pollution, Norman Shaw Building (06.06.85) 455
Questions
Business statement 443, 1015
Coal mining, Northern region 5-6
Cycling 625
Dept of Health & Social Security, Civil servants political activities 106w
Ethiopia, Food aid 635
House of Commons questions, House of Commons Commission 60w
Members allowances, Members secretaries 16
Road signs, Rural areas 625
Trade unions, Voting methods 401w

Belgium
Sanitaryware (10.06.85) 730-6

Bell, Mr Stuart
Debates etc
Appropriation (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (05.06.85) 402-6
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 568
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 1003-4
Border security in Ireland 535w
Skillcentres, Middlesbrough 448w, 520w

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 966-8
Questions
Small businesses, Data banks 175w
Small businesses, Government contracts 297
Small industrial workshops 327-8w

Bendall, Mr Vivian
Questions
Recycling 175w
Sutcliffe, Peter, Prison discipline 587w

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 8

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 320
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 547, 552, 553, 560, 565-7, 576
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 901, 964-6, 973, 982 (13.06.85) 1043
Higher education (04.06.85) 213, 236-9
Young people (11.06.85) 816, 830
Questions
Bus services, Safety standards 371w
Cruise missiles, Military Exercises 562w
Education Act 1981, Local education authorities 330w
Falkland Islands, Defence expenditure 140
Further education, Age participation rates 328-30w
Graduates 128w
Higher education, Cost per student 27-8w
Holloway Prison, Prison administration 493-4w
Holloway Prison, Womens prisons 207-8w
Import penetration, Batteries 177w
Non-domestic rates 295
Okehampton bypass 197w, 380w
School meals, Costs 505w
Secondary education, Grammar schools 569-70w
Speech therapists, Medical education 359w
Speech therapists, Pay 430w
Student grants, Costs 165-6w
Student numbers 23-6w
Student numbers, EC countries 25-6w
Student numbers Overseas students 24w
Student numbers, Postgraduate students 26-8w
Student numbers, Universities 27-9w
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Public footpaths 456w
Youth training scheme 276w
Youth unemployment 352-3w

Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Debates etc
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1054-6

Benzodiazepines
Drug abuse 226w
Drugs 283w

Berkshire
Structure plans 457w

Berlin 76w
Armed forces deployment 76-7w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Questions
Detention centres 434
Wages Inspectorate 404w

Berwick Rangers Football Club 411w

Best, Mr Keith
Debates etc
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 165, 172, 184, 192, 193-4
Questions
Electricity generation, Water 275-6w
Housing benefits, Private rented housing 93w
Nuclear non proliferation, UN resolutions 487w
Public Records Office, Cash limits 556w
Radioactive waste disposal 311-2w
Radioactive waste disposal, Public inquiries 202w
Radioactive waste disposal, Wales 198w
Welsh Office, Cash limits 264w
Welsh Water Authority, Consumer protection 264w

Bidwell, Mr Sydney
Debates etc
Sri Lanka, Political refugees (03.06.85) 58-9
Questions
Entry clearances, Codes of practice 206w

Biffen, Rt Hon John, *Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons*
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 565, 577-8
Water pollution, Norman Shaw Building (05.06.85) 375
Questions
Business statement 441-8, 1013-22
House of Commons, Members 195w
House of Commons catering, Terrace Pavilion 407w
House of Commons division bells 306w
House of Commons procedure 14-5
House of Commons procedure, Private Members bills 15
House of Commons questions, Lord Privy Seal 59-60w
House of Commons Refreshment Department, Bottled water 534w
Members allowances, Members secretaries 15-6
Norman Shaw Building, Sanitation 306w
Palace of Westminster, Boats 14
Private Members bills 195w
Research assistants 16-7

Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 323
Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (05.06.85) 401-2
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 562, 563
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 905
Questions
Bank of England, Redundancy 440-1w
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 1002-3
Members allowances, Members secretaries 16
Police, Accountability 432
Police informers, Northern Ireland 1000-1
Ulster Defence Regiment 143-4

Bilateral aid
Agriculture 558-9w
Expenditure 558-9w

Birds
Pest control 423w
Research 273w

Birkina Faso 194-5w

Birmingham
Rate increases (07.06.85) 593-4

Birmingham City Council Bill 1984/85
Order for consideration read (11.06.85) 737, (12.06.85) 875, (13.06.85) 995

Birmingham & District Society for Autistic Children 184w

Black economy 742-3
Building industry 500w

Blackburn, Dr John G
Debates etc
Social security (03.06.85) 48
Questions
Skillcentres 123-4w

Black, John 303-4w, 307w
Homicide 303-4w, 307w

Blaen-y-Cwm
Forestry grants 168w

Blaize, Herbert 5w

Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 314-5

Blind
Severe disablement allowance 479-81w

Block grant 412w
Local government reform 564w

Board & lodging charges 181w, 229w, 363-4w, 492w, 513w, 546-7w, 584w
Council house waiting lists 513w
Members correspondence 181w
Social security recipients 229w
Supplementary benefits 363-4w, 492w, 546-7w, 584w

Boats
Palace of Westminster 14

Body, Mr Richard
Questions
EC grants & loans 90w
Long Sutton & Sutton Bridge bypass, Orders & regulations 265w

Body searches 153w, 368-9w
Armagh Prison 153w, 368-9w
Women 368-9w

Boiler conversion scheme 6

Bolton
Council house sales 887

Bombings
Embassies 385w
Killeen 260w, 1004

Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Questions
Factory Inspectorate, West Midlands 172w
Part-time employment, Low pay 404w

Border security in Ireland 248w, 535w, 998

Bosphorus bridge 299-300

Bottled water 534w
House of Commons Refreshment Department 534w

Bottomley, Mr Peter, Under-Secretary of State for Employment
Questions
Air pollution control, Health & Safety Executive 171w
Asbestos, Faslane 200w
Electricity (Factories Act) Special Regulations, 1908, Prosecutions 572w
Employment Act 1982, Industrial democracy 356w
Employment schemes 402w
Factory Inspectorate, West Midlands 172w
Fairgrounds, Accidents 353w
Government Communications Headquarters, Industrial relations 406w
Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Disclosure of information 356w
Health & Safety Executive, Finance 405w
Hospitals, Food hygiene 737-8
House of Commons questions, Dept of Employment 55w
Industrial accidents 58-9w
Industrial accidents, Death 278-82w
Industrial democracy 397w
Industrial democracy, EC action 397w
Industrial health & safety 201w
Industrial health & safety, Orders & regulations 201w
Industrial noise, EC law 522-3w
Industrial safety, Prosecutions 573w
Low pay 400w
Mercury, Health & Safety Executive 276w
National Freight Company, Fires 521w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, Civil service dispersal 277-8w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, Employment Opportunities 277w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, Manpower 276-7w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, Recruitment 276-7w
Nuclear power stations, Civil service dispersal 278w
Parental leave, EC action 352w
Parental leave, EC law 201w
Part-time employment, Low pay 404w
Pesticides, Accidents 56w
Pesticides, Dieldrin 355w
Pesticides, Health education 56w
Public holidays 523-4w
Shipbuilding, Average earnings 453-4w
Shipbuilding, Manpower 405-6w
Trade union elections 57w, 401w
Trade union elections, Trade union officials 402-3w
Trade union elections, Voting methods 401w
Trade unions, Political levy 398-9w
Trade unions, Secret ballot 574-8w
Trade unions, Voting methods 401-2w
Unemployment, EC countries 170-2w
Wages councils 399w, 745-6
Wages councils, Prosecutions 402w
Wages councils, Retail trade 400w
Wages councils, Statistics 745-6
Wages councils, Trade unions 399w
Wages councils, Young people 402w
Wages councils, Youth employment 399w, 746
"Wages Councils Consultation Paper' 353w
Wages Inspectorate 404w
Wood preservatives, Hazardous materials 578-9w
Wood preservatives, Poisoning 56w
Young people, Pay 397w, 404w

Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Debates etc
Airports (5.06.85) 327
Elderly (06.06.85) 481-2
Questions
Building Societies Association, Ministerial speeches 264w
Express coach services, Safety 628
Financial management unit 294w
Road construction, Expenditure 372w
Spain, EC accession 528-9w

Boum Hall clinic (07.06.85) 602, 603-4, 604-5

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Social security (03.06.85) 45
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, Private Members Motion (07.06.85) 608-9
Questions
Dept of Health & Social Security, Departmental publications 358w

Bowden, Mr Gerald
Questions
Council house sales, Southwark 517w

Boxing 750

Boyes, Mr Roland
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 551
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1050, 1085, 1088-91
Handicapped (10.06.85) 671, 673, 683-4
Questions
Animal cruelty 128w
Dept of Health & Social Security, Industrial disputes 140w
Drug abuse, Police 208w
EC Trade Mark Office 491w
London Residuary Body 462w
MacGregor, Ian, Pay 133w
Quota of handicapped workers 738-9
Trident missiles, Casualties 146-7w
Unemployment, Older workers 395w
USSR, Hot line 137w

Boyson, Dr Rhodes, Minister of State Northern Ireland Office
Debates etc
Appropriation (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (05.06.85) 382-8
Questions
Agricultural research, Northern Ireland 468w
Bankruptcy, Northern Ireland 82w
Border security in Ireland 535w
Dairy farming, Northern Ireland 537w
Employment level, Northern Ireland 368w
Enterprise Ulster, Finance 1006-7
Gas supply industry, Northern Ireland 426w, 536w
Government assistance to industry, Northern Ireland 553w
House of Commons questions, Northern Ireland Office 83-4w
Hyster 83w
Kilroot Power Station 998-9
Kinsale gas pipeline 468w, 553w
Lear Fan, Carbon fibre 247w
Lear Fan, Company liquidations 85-6w
Natural gas, Northern Ireland 535w
Refrigeration, Northern Ireland 426-7w
River pollution, Northern Ireland 554-6w
Shares, Northern Ireland 554w
Standard Telephones & Cables, Northern Ireland 999-1000
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 537w

Bradford City Football Club
Fires 153-4

Bradford Metropolitan District Council 561w
Concessionary television licences 561w

Braine, Rt. Hon Sir Bernard
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 562

Brandon-Bravo, Mr Martin M
Questions
Community programme, East Midlands 398w
Foreign companies in UK 290
Police, Vacancies 209w

Bray, Dr Jeremy
Debates etc
Eurolex, Mergers (07.06.85) 564
Higher education (04.06.85) 219
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1133-42, 1188
Questions
Business statement 442-3

Breast cancer
Death 430w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 430w

Breathing apparatus 521w

Brecon & Radnor
By election writs (07.06.85) 545-90, (12.06.85) 875

Brewing industry
France 131w
Imports 133w
Subsidies 131w
Unfair competition 452w

Bridges
Northern Ireland 541-2w

Bright, Mr Graham
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 313-4

Brighton Labour Party (07.06.85) 602

British Rail Engineering Ltd 625

British Aerospace
Privatisation 439w

British Airports Authority
Privatisation 197w, 413w

British citizenship
Armed forces 139, 145
Armed forces civilians 139, 145
Zimbabwe 136-7w

British embassies
Sri Lanka 220-1w

British Gas Corporation
Privatisation 1-4, 294w, 571w

British Leyland 290-2
Bathgate 292
Goods vehicles 292
Government assistance to nationalised industries 173w
Investment 295-6

British Overseas Trade Board
Trade fairs 454w

British Petroleum 571w

British Rail
Capital investment 158w
Closed shop 740
Equal opportunities 631
Flexible rostering 374w
Land acquisition 197-8w
Locomotives 623-4
Procurement 624-5
Rolling stock 624

British Rail Engineering 371w, 624
Factory closures 371w
Redundancy 371w
Swindon 621
Trade unions 371w

British Rail Southern Region 3-4w
Rolling stock 3-4w

British Railways Board
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 183-4w
Railway Property 183-4w

British Railways (Trowse Bridge) Bill (HL) 1984/85
2R order read (11.06.85) 737, (12.06.85) 875, (13.06.85) 995

British residents abroad
Business travel 270w
Hong Kong 408w
Nigeria 270w
Retirement pensions 546w

British shipbuilders
Occupational pensions 323w
Privatisation 323w

British Steel Corporation
Factory closures 176w

British Telecom
Office of Telecommunications 324w
Privatisation 134w, 491-2w
Shares 134w, 491-2w

Britoil
Privatisation 562w, 571w

Brittan, Rt Hon Leon, *Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Sri Lanka, Ministerial statements (03.06.85) 52-9
Questions
Bombings, Embassies 385w
Charity Commission, Cash limits 561w
Civil defence, Defence research 209w
Civil defence, Departmental publications 283-4w
Criminal statistics 424-5
Drug abuse 386-7w
House of Commons questions, Home Office 17-8w
Immigration Act 1971 430-1
Immigration controls 431
Immigration rules 431-2
Intelligence services, Ombudsman 211-2w
Leeds Prison, Prison overcrowding 153-4w
Metropolitan Police 210w
Metropolitan Police, Accountability 432-3
Metropolitan Police, Overtime 425
Police, Accountability 432
Police, Manpower 424-5
Police, Vacancies 209w
Police Federation 206w
Political refugees, Tamils 432
Prisoners, Nutritional needs 386w
Sportsgrounds, Fire prevention 430
Sportsgrounds, Football 428-30
Sportsgrounds, Safety 429-30
Terrorism, Arrests 22w
Video recordings, Censorship 381-2w

Broadcasting
Independent Broadcasting Authority 210w

Broadcasting Act 1981 210w

Broadleaves in Britain 413-4w, 446w

Broadmoor Hospital 547w, 587w

Brodie Whyte & Whitten 446w

Brooke, Mr Peter, *Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Questions
Barley, Viruses 30w
Higher education, Cost per student 27-8w
Higher education, Expenditure 30-1w
Student numbers 23-6w
Student numbers, EC countries 25-6w
Student numbers, Higher education 31w
Student numbers, Overseas students 24w
Student numbers, Postgraduate students 26-8w
Student numbers, Universities 27-9w

Brown, Mr Gordon
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 961-3
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & Rem stages (05.06.85) 368-9
Social security (03.06.85) 45
Questions
Asbestos, Faslane 200w, 203w
Child benefit, Social security benefits rates 234w
Coal mining, Redundancy 194w
Exceptional needs payments, Pensioners 228w
HMS Euryalus, Repairs & maintenance 424w
Housing Benefit Review 286w
Housing benefits, Expenditure 237-8w
Housing benefits, Income 286w
Housing benefits, Rates & rating 286w
Ministry of Defence, Defence procurement 424w
Rating revaluations, Publicity 252w
Rating revaluations, Scotland 252w
Social Fund, Budget 237w
Social security benefits, Children 228w
Social security benefits rates 481w
Social security recipients, Rates & rating 286-7w
Social security recipients, Supplementary benefits 287w
Social security recipients, Water charges 238w
Social security reviews 237w, 431w
State earnings related pension scheme, Earnings related supplement 240-1w, 591w
Supplementary benefits 228w
Supplementary benefits, Budget 287-8w
Youth training scheme, Fife 415w

Brown, Mr Hugh
Debates etc
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 339-40, 346
Social security (03.06.85) 48
Questions
Gas supply industry, Northern Ireland 536w

Brown, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Public petitions (07.06.85) 593
Questions
Local authorities, Contracts 438

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Business statement 445
Civil service, Legal profession 438-40w
Defence contracts, Warships 503w
Law centres 631-2
Law Society, Coopers & Lybrand Associates 555-6w
Shipbuilding, Average earnings 453-4w
Shipbuilding, Government assistance to industry 453w
Shipbuilding, Manpower 405-6w
Shipbuilding, Merchant ships 453w
Shipbuilding, Regional aid 453w
Shipbuilding, Warships 452-3w
Tobacco industry, Redundancy 452w
Unfair competition, Tobacco industry 452w

Brown, Mr Robert C
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 321
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 903, 942-4
Questions
Falkland Islands, Defence expenditure 140-1
Government assistance to industry, Northern region 297-8

Brown, Mr Ron
Questions
Business statement 1022
General Belgrano 1008-9
Wages councils, Prosecutions 402w

Browne, Mr John
Questions
Business statement 1016

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 325
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 338, 353-6, 361, 371-2, 379-80, 381
Questions
Asbestos, Faslane 124w
Attendance allowance, Costs 223w
Mobility allowance, Costs 223w
Post Office closures 285-6
Trade unions, Voting methods 401-2w

Bruinvels, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 328
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 559, 586
Historic Churches (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (11.06.85) 848
Questions
Business statement 447, 1020
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 9
Community programme, Leicester 356-7w, 747
Crown courts, Waiting lists 255-6w
Curriculum 417w
Education, Cost per pupil 217-8w
Education & Industry 416w
HM Inspectorate of prisons 19w
Holloway Prison, Womens prisons 208w
Homicide 214w
House of Commons questions, Attorney-General 1-2w
House of Commons questions, Church Commissioners 1-2w
House of Commons questions, Civil service 7-9w
House of Commons questions, Dept of Education & Science 29-30w
House of Commons questions, Dept of Employment 55w
House of Commons questions, Dept of Energy 23-4w
House of Commons questions, Dept of Health & Social Security 99w
House of Commons questions, Dept of the Environment 39-40w
House of Commons questions, Dept of Trade & Industry 13-4w
House of Commons questions, Dept of Transport 3w
House of Commons questions, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 74w
House of Commons questions, Home Office 17-8w

House of Commons questions, House of Commons Commission 60w
House of Commons questions, Lord Privy Seal 59-60w
House of Commons questions, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 87-8w
House of Commons questions, Ministry of Defence 62w
House of Commons questions, Northern Ireland Office 83-4w
House of Commons questions, Office of Arts & Libraries 6-7w
House of Commons questions, Paymaster-General 82w
House of Commons questions, Public Accounts Commission 10-1w
House of Commons questions, Scottish Office 80w
House of Commons questions, Solicitor-General for Scotland 10w
House of Commons questions, Treasury 66w
House of Commons questions, Welsh Office 91w
Local enterprise agencies 180w
Local Enterprise Week 180w
Local government elections, Northern Ireland 537w, 1006
Mathematics education, Curriculum 416w
Metropolitan Police 210w
Ministry of Defence, Official cars 137-8
Motorways, Lighting 379w
Motorways, Sewers 371w
M25, Research 266w
National energy managers exhibition 527w
Offenders, Travel restrictions 304w
Police, Injuries 19w
Prime Minister official engagements 129w, 193w, 512w
Prison staff 19w
Professional & Executive Recruitment, Take-up of employment 403w
Rate limitation, Publicity 456w
Reading Prison 21w
Religious education, Curriculum 331w
Religious education, Secondary education 330-1w
Research assistants 16-7
Road safety 372w
Small firms service 133w
St Stephens entrance, Pedestrian crossings 21w
Surrogate mothers 478w
Sutcliffe, Peter 547w
Urban programme, Government grants to local authorities 312w
Vocational education, Curriculum 416-7w

Bryan, Sir Paul
Debates etc
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1081-3

Buchan, Mr Norman
Debates etc
Arts finance, Standing Order No 10 applications (06.06.85) 458-9
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 548
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 76

Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick, Minister of State for Energy
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 294w, 571w
Britoil, Privatisation 571w
Gas flaring 23w
Gas supply industry, Privatisation 194w
North Sea, Ships 275w
Offshore drilling 194w
Offshore supply vessels, Norway 295w
Wind power, Energy research 5
Wind power, Tax credits 5

Buck, Sir Antony
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 914, 968-70
War pensions (13.06.85) 1119
Questions
Defence arms control unit 138

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1031

Budget
Social Fund 237w
Supplementary benefits 287-8w

Building industry
Black economy 500w
Tax yields 501w
VAT registration 500w
VAT threshold 500w

Building regulations 411w, 465w
Small businesses 318-23w

Building repairs
Defective housing 881-2
Prefabricated housing 881
System building 881-2

Building societies 248-50w

Building Societies Association 264w
Ministerial Speeches 264w

"Building Societies Consultation Paper" 248-50w

Bullwood Hall Prison 560w

"Burdens on Business" 173w, 324w, 390w

Bureaucracy
Business 390w

Burnham Committee 257w
Public appointments 257w

Bus services 626-7
Competition 627
Costs 369-70w
Expenditure 159-60w
Local government expenditure 370w
Northern Ireland 368w
Privatisation 368-72w
Rural areas 627-8
Safety 627-8
Safety standards 370-1w

Bus services subsidies 370w

Buses
Greater London 413w, 627
Parking 413w, 627
Passengers 157-8w
Privatisation 150w
Safety 630
Safety belts 630
Speed limits 373w

Business
Bureaucracy 390w

Business expansion scheme 112-3w
Company taxation 112-3w

Business expenses
Family doctors 141-2w

Business in the Community 288
Government grants 288

Business premises
Property development 315w

Business questions
Speakers rulings & statements (13.06.85) 1019

Business sponsorship incentive scheme 7-8w

Business statement 441-8, 1013-22

Business travel
British residents abroad 270w

Butcher, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
Debates etc
Manchester Steel (05.06.85) 418-21
Questions
Amateur radio, Licensing 326w
British shipbuilders, Occupational pensions 323w
British Telecom, Shares 134w, 491-2w
Drugs, Patents 327w
EC Trade Mark Office 491w
Fairey Engineering, Contracts for advanced technology 455w
House of Commons questions, Dept of Trade & Industry 13-4w
Institution of Production Engineers, Exhibitions 180w
Italy, Domestic appliances 17w
Nissan, Motor vehicle parts 449-50w
Nissan, Procurement 491w
Office of Telecommunications, British Telecom 324w
Pirate radio stations 11-2w
Shipbuilding, Government assistance to industry 453w
Shipbuilding, Merchant ships 453w
Shipbuilding, Warships 452-3w
Value added network services, Licensing 190w
Washing machines 17w
Westland 30 helicopters 178w

Butler, Rt Hon Adam, Minister of State for Defence Procurement
Debates etc
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1035-44, 1049, 1098
Questions
Defence, Technology transfer 565w
Defence contracts, Helicopters 149w
Defence contracts, NATO 148w
Defence procurement 149
European fighter aircraft 146w
IBM, Restrictive trade practices 503w
Ministry of Defence, Defence procurement 424w
Ministry of Defence, Official secrets 305w
Ministry of Defence, Pay settlements 258-9w
Radioactive waste disposal, RAF Chivenor 467w
Royal ordnance factories, Enfield 143-4w
SP-70 guns 63w
Strategic defence initiative, USA 147w
Training aircraft, Defence contracts 62-4w
Trident 146w
Trident, Costs 305w
Trident, Employment opportunities 146w
Trident missiles, Casualties 146-7w
Trident missiles, Nuclear weapons tests 467w
Tucano aircraft, Defence contracts 305w
Tucano aircraft, Prices 304w
Warsaw Pact, Explosives 64w

Butterfill, Mr John
Debates etc
Wages councils (06.06.85) 498, 509, 525-6
Questions
Sewers, Occupiers liability 318w
Sewers, Property insurance 327w
Sewers, Rate support grants 318w

By election writs
Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 545-90, (12.06.85) 875

By elections
Greater London Council 457w
Local government expenditure 457w

Bye laws
Small businesses 441w

Bypasses 197w
Orders & regulations 265w
Wales 92w

Caborn, Mr Richard
Questions
African National Congress, South Africa 220w
Namibia, International Court of Justice 220w
Namibia, Political prisoners 220w
National Freight Company, Fires 521w
Wages Inspectorate 404w

Callaghan, Rt Hon James
Debates etc
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 194-6
Questions
Private Members motions, Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85 438
State earnings related pension scheme 1008

Callaghan, Mr Jim

Questions
Bus services, Privatisation 370w
Derelict land, North West region 514w
Unemployment, Rochdale 199w

Calling of members
Speakers rulings & statements (03.06.85) 59, 87, (05.06.85) 327, 328-9, (07.06.85) 573-4 (14.06.85) 1181, 1190

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 323-4
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 546, 550
Food & Environment Protection Bill (HL), Rep (10.06.85) 712-6, 717, 719
Oral question time intervention (05.06.85) 297
Questions
Alachlor, Weedkillers 88w
Barley, Viruses 30w
Business statement 448, 1017
Defence procurement, Aish & Company 145w
Falkland Islands, Defence expenditure 141
Health hazards, Crop spraying 100w
Local government expenditure 891-2
Paraquat, West Germany 422w
Pesticides, Accidents 56w
Pesticides, Codes of practice 88-9w
Pesticides, Environment 89w
Pesticides, Exports 14w
Pesticides, health education 56w
Pesticides, Safety 89w
Pesticides, Safety information 89w
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 212-3w
Small businesses, Government contracts 297
Wages councils, Retail trade 400w
Wood preservatives, Hazardous materials 578-9w
Wood preservatives, Poisoning 56w

Canada
Fenitrothion 581w
Salmon 289w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Questions
Chemical weapons 61w
Ministry of Defence, Official cars 64w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 536w
Sportsgrounds, Safety 462-3w

Cancer
Medical research 359w
Screening 233w

Cancer hazards
Nuclear power stations 10-2

Cancer link 430w

Canvassing 455w
Local government expenditure 455w

Capital 69w

Capital gains tax 440w

Capital investment
British Rail 158w
Housing 268w
Local government expenditure 458w

Capital transfer tax 440w
Ancient woodlands 561-2w
Land 561-2w

Car hire
Greater London 375w
Licensing 375w

Car industry
Foreign companies in UK 449-50w

Caravan sites
Electrical safety 445-6w
Scotland 445-6w

Caravan Sites & Control of Development Act 1960 445-6w

Carbohydrates
Food labelling 110w

Carbon fibre
Lear Fan 247w

Cardigan bypass 92w

Care proceedings
Child care 552w

Carlile, Mr Alex
Debates etc
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 172, 179, 189
Questions
Agricultural workers, Wales 557-8w
Cookham Wood Prison 560w
Durham Prison 560-1w
Holloway Prison, Prison accommodation 561w
Judges 633-4
Mid Wales Development 558w
Milk, Production quotas 557w
Nurses, Pay 5w
Public order offences, Stonehenge 560w
Young offenders, Detention centres 213w

Carlisle, Mr John
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1028
Food & Environment Protection Bill (HL), Rep (10.06.85) 693, 694, 696, 698, 703, 705
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 27
Questions
Chiropodists, South Bedfordshire Health Authority 473-4w
Gleneagles agreement 460w
South Africa, Overseas trade 436

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 585
Questions
Air pollution, Sulphur dioxide 457w
Boiler conversion scheme 6
Countryside Commission, Finance 887
Employment Act 1982, Industrial democracy 356w
Land drainage committees 420w
Manufactured exports 176w

Carttiss, Mr Michael
Questions
Local Enterprise Week 175w

Cartwright, Mr John
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 313
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1078-81
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 31
Questions
Armed forces, Resignations 146
Buses, Greater London 627
Car hire, Greater London 375w
Exhibitions, Industry & Parliament Trust 261w
House renovation grants 461w, 879
Nurses, Pay 153
Primary education, Teacher training 569w
Radioactive wastes, Magnox reactors 38w
Radioactive wastes, Nuclear power stations 39w
St Nicholas Hospital, Plumstead 285w
Teachers Superannuation Working Party 330w
Teachers Superannuation Working Party, Public appointments 329w
Woolwich arsenal, Pest control 423w

Cash, Mr William
Questions
Legionnaires disease, Inquiries 591w
Railway timetables, Publicity 150w
Road tax, Sub post offices 531-2w

Cash limits
Charity Commission 561w
Dept of Education & Science 336w, 511-2w
Dept of Employment 123w
Dept of the Environment 124w
Means tested benefits 362w
Public Records Office 556w
Scottish Office 447w
Welsh Office 264w

Castle Howard 501-2w
Art works 501-2w

Castledawson bypass 542w

Casualties
Trident missiles 146-7w

Caugh Hill 540w
Water treatment 540w

Cayman Islands
Turtle products 201-2w

Censorship
Public appointments 381-2w
Video recordings 381-2w

Centaur military vehicles 407w

Central America
EC external relations 223w
Military attaches 308w

Central Council of Physical Recreation 875-6

Central Electricity Generating Board
Acid rain 294w

Central ordnance depots 145w

Central-local government relations
Dept of Health & Social Security 543w
Dept of the Environment 310w
Dept of Transport 375w
Education 465w
Home Office 382w
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food 291w
Treasury 392w

Ceramic industries
Unfair competition (10.06.85) 730-6

Cereal cooperatives 519w
Government grants 519w

Cereals
Farm buildings 519w
Intervention stocks 87w, 292w

Cervical cancer
Screening 101-2w

Chairman of Committee of the Whole House
Debates etc
Amendments & new clauses (05.06.85) 353, 377
Procedure (05.06.85) 340, 402
Scope of debate (05.06.85) 342, 375

Chalker, Mrs Lynda, Minister of State for Transport
Questions
A1, Road safety barriers 371w
A38, Road safety barriers 530w
A127, Road signs 628-9
A127, Road works 628
Buses, Greater London 413w
Buses, Safety 630
Buses, Safety belts 630
Cycling 625-6
Driving licences, Medical examinations 583-4w
Driving offences, Glue sniffing 581w
Driving tests 374w
Driving tests, Kent 582w
Driving tests, Motorcycles 581-2w
Goods vehicles, Licensing 529w
Gravelly Hill viaduct, Repairs & maintenance 376-7w
Local government reform, Civil service manpower 4-5w
London buses, Procurement 158-9w
London docklands railway 379w
London docklands railway, Construction costs 379w
London docklands railway, Fares 379w
London docklands railway, Privatisation 379w
London Regional Transport, Advertising 629

London Regional Transport, One person operation 373-4w
Long Sutton & Sutton Bridge bypass, Orders & regulations 265w
Lorries, Overloading offences 437-8w
Lorries, Safety 631
Midland link motorways 376w
Midland link motorways, Road salting & gritting 376w
Mobility of disabled 373w
Motorcycles, Noise control 437w
Motorways, Departmenal publications 156-7w
Motorways, Lighting 379w
Motorways, Road works 265w
Motorways, Sewers 371w
Motorways, Speed limits 373w
M3, Road construction 374-5w
M3, Road safety 630-1
M6, Motorway service areas 149-50w
M11, Road construction 437w
M25, Research 266w
Okehampton bypass 197w, 380w
Oxford Circus Station, Fires 629
Piers, River Thames 197w
Road construction, Expenditure 372w, 374w
Road safety 372w
Road safety, Pre-school education 4w
Road safety, Research 629-30
Road safety barriers 4w, 630
Road signs 375w
Road signs, Basildon 372w
Road signs, Rural areas 625-6
Roads, Greater London 4w
Ruthenium, Transport of hazardous materials 376w
Transport of radioactive materials, Nuclear fuels 2w
Woolwich Ferry 372w

Change of use 463w

Channel crossing
Tenders 374w

Channel tunnel
Road construction 156w

Channon, Rt Hon Paul, Minister of State for Trade
Questions
Aid financed trade, Manufactured goods 565w
Apprentices, Vacancies 293
Asbestos, Imports 325-6w
British Overseas Trade Board, Trade fairs 454w
Chemical weapons, Export licensing 175w
COCOM, Civil servants secondment 565w
Confectionery, USA 131-2w
Defence equipment, Chile 467w
Exchange rates 287-8
Export controls, Strategic Defence Initiative 451w
Export controls, Technology transfer 451-2w
Export controls, USA 451w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Fraud 132w
Export Credits Guarantee Department Review, Management 454-5w
Foreign investment in UK, Government grants 177-8w
IBM, Restrictive trade practices 452w
Import penetration, Batteries 177w
Import penetration, Far East 454w
Industrial training 293-4
Japan, Foreign trade 301
Japan, Non-tariff barriers 300
Manufactured exports 176w
Manufactured goods, Balance of trade 298
Manufactured goods, International trade 190w
Manufactured goods, UK trade with EC 299
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 176w
Non-tariff barriers, EC internal trade 178w
Overseas trade 14-6w
Overseas trade, Highlands of Scotland 174w
Overseas trade, Human rights 174w
Overseas trade, Romania 176w
Philippines, Balance of trade 15-6w
Philips, Factory closures 298-9
Skilled workers 293
Skilled workers, Recruitment 292-3
Skilled workers, Unemployment 293-4
Trade missions, South Africa 565-8w
2 4 5-T, Imports 261w
UK trade with EC 179w

Chapman, Mr Sydney
Questions
Asbestos, Waste disposal 880
Community programme, Greater London 398w
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 636
Kilroot Power Station 998-9
Rate rebates, Social security recipients 459w
Regional health authorities, Expenditure 236-7w, 589w
Road construction, Expenditure 374w

Charities Act 1960 296w

Charity Commission
Cash limits 561w
Inquiries 296w

Chemical weapons 61w, 148-9
Arms control 502w
Arms control treaties 148, 307w
Defence equipment 148
Export licensing 175w
USA 305w, 502w
USSR 147-8, 305w
Warsaw Pact 502w

Child Abduction & Custody Bill (HL) 1984/85
Ref to 2R Com (04.06.85) 154
2R* (13.06.85) 1115
Money res* (13.06.85) 1115

Child benefit
Industrial workers 233w
Social security benefits rates 234w

Child care
Care proceedings 552w
Criminal records 497-8w

Child Care Steering Group 497-8w
Public appointments 497-8w

Childbirth
Anaesthetics 434w

Children
Accidents 592w
Cochlear implants 184w
Family income supplements 359w
Safety 450w
Social security benefits 228w

Chile
Armed forces training 407w
Armed forces visits 423-4w
Arms embargoes 409w
Arms exports 259w, 407w
Civil servants visits abroad 75w
Defence equipment 467w
Foreign policy 75w
Human rights 75w, 409w
Missing persons 75w
National territory 409w
Nuclear reactors 455w
Political prisoners 75-6w

China
Prime Minister 435w

Chiropodists
South Bedfordshire Health Authority 473-4w

Chityan, Sergei 271w

Chope, Mr Christopher
Questions
Football hooliganism, Government grants 129w
Hunt class minesweepers 168w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Privatisation 134w
Skillcentres, Southampton 200w

Chorionic villus sampling
Clinical trials 239-40w

Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970 (10.06.85) 640-86

Church buildings
Northern Ireland (11.06.85) 847-67

Church Commissioners
House of Commons questions 1-2w

Church schools
Teacher training 509w

Churchill, Mr Winston
Debates etc
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1038, 1050, 1091-4
Questions
Buses, Safety belts 630

Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act 1984 (Zimbabwe) 136-7w

City of Manchester
Parliamentary constituencies 457-8w

Civil defence
Defence research 209w
Departmental publications 283-4w
Disasters 206-7w
NATO 211w

Civil disorder
Sri Lanka 221-2w

Civil servants
Immigration controls 208w
Pay 258-9w
Re-employment 502w

Civil servants background
Welsh Office 91-2w

Civil servants political activities
Dept of Health & Social Security 106w

Civil servants secondment
COCOM 527-8w, 565w

Civil servants visits abroad
Chile 75w

Civil service
House of Commons questions 7-9w
Legal profession 438-40w
Pay 17-8
Travelling expenses 67w

Civil service dispersal
Health & Safety Executive 278w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate 4, 277-8w
Nuclear power stations 278w

Civil service foreign service allowance 144-5

Civil service manpower 111-2w
Drug crimes 393w
Local government reform 4-5w, 34w
Manpower Services Commission 448w

Civil service pensions
Hong Kong 408w

Civil service recruitment
Ethnic minorities 590w

Civil service unions 9w, 17

Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 283-4w

Clark, Mr Alan, Under-Secretary of State for Employment
Questions
Employment discrimination, Sexual deviancy 57w
Employment level 394-6w
Employment level, Part-time employment 396w
Employment level, Tameside 353w
Employment opportunities 354w
Job release scheme, Non-contributory benefits 448-9w
Job release scheme, Pay 405w
Landor Cartons, Dismissal 405w
Manpower Services Commission, Aids for handicapped 171-2w
Part-time employment 59w, 405w
Quota of handicapped workers 738-9
Rehabilitation centres 406-7w
Rehabilitation centres, Manpower 406w
Temporary employment 521w

Unemployment 121-2w, 354-5w, 393-6w, 577-8w
Unemployment, Derbyshire 353-4w
Unemployment, Inner city partnerships 59w
Unemployment, Lambeth 395w
Unemployment, Merseyside 403w
Unemployment, Newham 522w
Unemployment, Older workers 395w
Unemployment, Portsmouth 577w
Unemployment, Rochdale 199w
Wages councils, Part-time employment 747-8
Youth unemployment 199-200w, 352-3w, 403w, 522w
Youth unemployment, Langbaurgh 744-5
Youth unemployment, Newham 199w, 522w

Clark, Dr David
Debates etc
Food & Environment Protection Bill (HL), Rep (10.06.85) 688-90, 708-11, 722-3, 724-6, 727, 728
Sites of special scientific interest, Nature conservation (10.06.85) 639
Wildlife & Countryside (Amendment) (No 2) Bill, 1R (10.06.85) 639
Questions
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 43-4w
Countryside Commission, Finance 886-7
DDT 579w
Hill livestock allowances 90w
Offshore supply vessels, Norway 295w
Planning permission, Small businesses 49-50w
Pollution control, Hazardous wastes 49w
Sites of special scientific interest 316w

Clark, Dr Michael
Debates etc
Public petitions (07.06.85) 605
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1183-4, 1187

Clark, Sir William
Questions
State earnings related pension scheme 751, 1008

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, *Minister of State for Health*
Questions
Abortion 429w
Abortion, Hospital beds 588w
Abortion, NHS 429w
Abortion, Young people 428-9w
Abortions, Hospital patients 431w
Benzodiazepines, Drug abuse 226w
Breast cancer, Death 430w
Cancer, Screening 233w
Cervical cancer, Screening 101-2w
Chiropodists, South Bedfordshire Health Authority 473-4w
Committee on Safety of Medicines 108-10w
Community health services, Expenditure 231w
Contraceptives, Licensing 549w
Contraceptives, Safety 549w
Cremation, Medical certificates 361w
Dalkon shield 473w
Dental health, Lost working days 97w
Dental services, Costs 98w
Dental services, Preventive medicine 97w
Dentistry, Patients 98w
Dentures 427w
Diabetes, Ethnic minorities 429-31w
Diabetes, Health service staff 365w
Dispensing doctors, Inquiries 142-3w
District health authorities, Managers 140w
Drugs, Price differences 359w
Drugs, Price reductions 363w
Drugs, Quality control 96w
Drugs, Testing 95w, 102w
Family doctors, Business expenses 141-2w
Family doctors, Part-time employment 224w
Family doctors, Pay 364w
Family doctors, Rural areas 225w
Family practitioner committees 94w
Family practitioner committees, Accounting 94-5w
Family practitioner committees, Computers in National Health Service 234-5w
Family practitioner committees, Suffolk 93-4w
Family practitioner services, Fees & charges services 475-6w
Fertility, Clinics 284w
Foreign patients, Income 95w
Health, Social class 367w
Health service staff, Pay 552w
Hospital closures, Hospital beds 184-8w
Hospital closures, Mental hospitals 184w
Hospital consultants 102w
Hospital consultants, Home visits 360w
Hospital doctors, Prescriptions 363w
Hospital staff 102w
Hospitals, Management 107w
Infectious diseases, Health service staff 226-7w
Infectious diseases, Hospitals 227-8w
Infectious diseases, Inquiries 226w
Jones, Sylvia, Mental hospitals 365w
Junior hospital doctors, Contracts of employment 587w
Junior hospital doctors, Employment opportunities 224w
Junior hospital doctors, Pay 587w
Junior hospital doctors, Working hours 588w
Legionnaires disease, Inquiries 591w
Legionnaires disease, Liverpool 106w
Legionnaires disease, Medical research 144w
Leukaemia, Age distribution 285w
Limited list prescribing 139-40w
Limited list prescribing, Costs 362-3w
Lipotriad 481w
Mastectomy Association, Government grants to voluntary organisations 430w
Mental Health Act Commission, Codes of practice 475w
Mentally disturbed offenders 98-9w
NHS, Expenditure 288w
NHS, Management 138-9w
NHS, Pregnancy tests 428w
NHS, Privatisation 543w, 551w
NHS, Management Board, Public appointments 547-8w
Nurses, Back pain 473w
Nurses, Pay 366-7w
Occupational therapists 474w
Occupational therapists, Vacancies 431w
Paramedical staff, Manpower 104-6w
Paramedical staff, Pay settlements 434w
Pearce, Idris, Conflict of interests 548-9w
Pearce, Idris, Pay 548w
Pensioners, Ethnic minorities 586w
Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee 358w
Prescription charges exemptions 432w
Prescriptions, Appeals 549-50w
Primary health care, Inner London boroughs 234w
Private hospitals, Planning permission 360-1w
Regional health authorities, Expenditure 236-7w, 589w
Reyes syndrome, Analgesics 182w
Rose, W H, Members correspondence 434w
Ruthenium, Medical research 359w
Savage, Wendy 224-5w
Social services, Health services 230-1w
Spectacles, Prices 475w
Speech therapists, Medical education 359w
Speech therapists, Pay 183w, 430w
St Nicholas Hospital, Plumstead 285w
Surgery, Infectious diseases 549w
Sutcliffe, Peter, Prison discipline 587w
Sutcliffe, Peter 547w

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 791-2
Questions
Asbestos, Faslane 50-1w
Asbestos, Waste disposal 879-80
Business statement 447
Overseas aid, National income 298w

Classification Packaging & Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984 450-1w

Clay, Mr Bob
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 974-5
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85, Public petitions (07.06.85) 602
Questions
Dept of Health & Social Security, Social security abuse 224w
Low pay 400w
Social security abuse 223-4w

Cleaning services
Infectious diseases 227w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 3

Clegg, Sir Walter
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 320

Clifford Hicks Tower 514w
Fires 514w

Clinical assistants 224w

Clinical psychologists 104-6w

Clinical trials
Chorionic villus sampling 239-40w

Clinics 232w
Fertility 284w

Closed circuit television
Lambeth 441w
Metropolitan Police 441w

Closed shop
British Rail 740

Clothing industry
Employment 390w
Skilled workers 398w

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 570-3
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1083-6
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85, Public petitions (07.06.85) 594-5
Questions
Prime Minister official engagements 193w
Quota of handicapped workers 738
Regional aid, Expenditure 11-2w
Temporary immigrants 423

Coal closure areas
Local enterprise agencies 288-9
Scotland 18-9
Skillcentres 58w

Coal Industry Act 1975 409w

Coal Industry Bill 1984/85
Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 245-79
Royal Assent (13.06.85) 1067

Coal mine closures
Standing Order No 10 applications (13.06.85) 1033-4

Coal mining 22-3w
Dismissal 8, 12-3, 20
Environment protection 459w
Government assistance to nationalised industries (04.06.85) 245-79
Industrial disputes 7-10, 12-3, 19-20, 284w, 425
Industrial relations 6, 13
Northern region 5-7
Redundancy 9, 194w
Scotland 194w
Solihull 877
Subsidence 409w
Wales 449w

"Coal & the Environment" 459w

Coastal fishing
Fish conservation 289w

Coastal protection
Departmental coordination 151w
Hayling Island 579-80w
Supply estimates 151w

Coastal Shipping 4w, 375-6w
EC action 375-6w

France 4w
Italy 375-6w

Coastguard
Drug crimes 377-8w
Expenditure 377-8w
Manpower 377-8w

Cochlear implants 184w
Children 184w

Cockburn, Bill 390w

Cockeram, Mr Eric
Questions
Skilled workers 293
Trade union elections 739
Wages councils, Youth employment 746

COCOM
Civil servants secondment 527-8w, 565w
Technology transfer 451w

Codes of practice
Entry clearances 206w
Handicapped workers 738
Mental Health Act Commission 475w
Pesticides 88-9w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc
M11, Public petitions (07.06.85) 598-9
Nutrition & health, Public petitions (07.06.85) 597-8
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85, Public petitions (07.06.85) 596-7
Questions
Abortion 429w
Abortion, NHS 429w
Abortion, Young people 428-9w
Abortions, Hospital patients 431w
Breast cancer, Death 430w
British Rail, Equal opportunities 631
Chemical weapons, Arms control treaties 307w
Chemical weapons, USA 305w, 502w
Chemical weapons, Warsaw Pact 502w
Clifford Hicks Tower, Fires 514w
Diabetes, Ethnic minorities 429-31w
House renovation grants, Waltham Forest 878
Immigration controls 21-2w
Local government reform, Computers 563-4w
Mastectomy Association, Government grants to voluntary organisations 430w
M11, Road construction 437w
NHS, Pregnancy tests 428w
Police national computer 382-3w
Police national computer, Missing persons 383-4w
Police national computer, Motor vehicle theft 384w
Police records, Disclosure of information 284w
Urban programme, Finance 32-3w

Coleman, Mr Donald
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 549, 568, 569, 570
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 176, 186-8

College of Speech Therapists 183w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 324
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1047, 1100
Questions
"Burdens on Business" 390w
Company management, Airbus Industrie 176w
Council house sales, Income 455w
Road signs 375w
Wind power, Tax credits 5

Commercial surrogacy 478w

Commercial television 213-4w

Committee on Safety of Medicines 108-10w
Reyes syndrome 182w

Common agricultural policy 289w

Commonwealth immigrants
Immigration controls (03.06.85) 52-9

Communicable diseases surveillance centre 181w

Community care 474w

Community centres
Urban programme 463-4w

Community health councils
NHS complaints 433w

Community health services
Expenditure 231w
NHS complaints 432-3w

Community industry scheme
Yorkshire & Humberside 520-1w
Youth employment 399w

Community nurses
Wales 264-5w

Community Nursing Services in Wales Review 264-5w
Public appointments 264-5w

Community programme 744
Dundee 415w
East Midlands 398w
Greater London 398w
Home helps 397w
Leicester 356-7w, 398w, 747
South west region 398w
West Midlands 398w

Companies
Falkland Islands 559w
Northern region 568-9w

Company liquidations
Lear Fan 85-6w

Company management
Airbus Industrie 176w

Company pensions
Early retirement 590w

Company taxation
Business expansion scheme 112-3w

Compensation
Crime victims 206w
Subsidence 409w

"Compensation & Support for Victims of Crime Government Reply" 206w

Competition
Air transport 621-2
Bus services 627

Complaints
Armed forces medical service 424w
Hospitals 481w
Prison hospitals 385w
Prison medical services 209w
Special hospitals 481w

Complaints against police
Royal Ulster Constabulary 259w

Computer applications
Land registration 127w
Local government reform 36-7w

Computer staff
Customs & Excise 249-50w
Dept of Health & Social Security 140w
Pay 250w
Resignations 249-50w

Computers
Greater London Council 515w
Local government reform 563-4w
Police vehicles 19w

Computers in Government departments
Customs & Excise 251w
Dept of the Environment 53w, 127w
Personal records 5-6w

Computers in National Health Service
Family practitioner committees 234-5w

Concannon, Rt Hon J D
Questions
Business statement 443
House renovation grants 888

Concessionary television licences 211w, 561w
Bradford Metropolitan District Council 561w

Conditions of employment
Junior hospital doctors 587w
Prison staff 154w

Confectionery
EC external trade 131-2w
USA 131-2w

Confederation of British Industry
Youth training scheme 400w

Conferences
USA 416w

Confiscated goods 69-70w
Customs & Excise 69-70w

Conflict of interests
Pearce, Idris 548-9w

Congenital abnormalities
Medical research 285-6w

Construction
Heathrow 266w
Plutonium 305w
Safety measures 203-4w

Construction costs
London docklands railway 379w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 245w
Prisons 154w

Construction materials
Maghaberry Prison 473w

Consultative Council on Local Government Finance 309-10w, 410-1w, 461w

Consumer protection
Labelling 450-1w
Safety 450w
Welsh Water Authority 264w

Consumer protection law 324w

Consumer Safety Act 1978 450w

Contraceptives
Health warnings 473w
Licensing 549w
Public petitions (07.06.85) 606
Safety 549w

Contracts
Local authorities 438

Contracts for advanced technology
Fairey Engineering 455w

Contracts of employment
Junior hospital doctors 587w

Control of Pollution (Territorial Sea) (Revocation) Regulations 1985 202-3w

Control orders 33w
Multiple occupation 33w

Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species 43-4w

Convictions
Euthanasia 22w
Exservicemen 304w

Conway, Mr Derek
Debates etc
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1051, 1090, 1096-7
Questions
Post Office closures, Shrewsbury 286

Cookers
Exceptional needs payments 358w

Cookham Wood Prison 560w

Cooklin, Shirley 562w
Ministers correspondence 562w

Cook, Mr Frank
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 569, 571
House of Commons terrace, hazards (07.06.85) 607
Questions

Bus services, Privatisation 370w
Radioactive wastes, Springfields 410w
Turtle products 202w
Turtle products, Cayman Islands 201-2w

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
Air fares, Western Europe 621
Food additives, Research 129w
Law centres 632-3

Coopers & Lybrand Associates 555-6w
Law Society 555-6w

Copyright
Ordnance Survey 315w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Questions
Coastguard, Drug crimes 377-8w
Coastguard, Manpower 377-8w
Crime victims, Compensation 206w
Fast reactors, Nuclear safeguards 527w
Gravelly Hill viaduct, Repairs & maintenance 376-7w
Midland link motorways 376w
Midland link motorways, Road salting & gritting 376w
Norman Shaw Building, Sanitation 306w
Norman Shaw Building, Water supply 513w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc
Business question time point of order (13.06.85) 1022-3
Pensioners Heating & Communications Bill, 1R (12.06.85) 893-5
Sri Lanka, Political refugees (03.06.85) 57-8
Questions
Armed forces deployment 63w
Armed forces visits, Chile 423w
Baton rounds, Northern Ireland 84w
Beausire, William 75w
Berlin 76w
Berlin, Armed forces development 76-7w
Business statement 1021-2
Chile, Armed forces training 407w
Chile, Arms exports 407w
Chile, Foreign policy 75w
Chile, Human rights 75w
Defence equipment, Chile 467w
El Salvador, Armed forces officers 77w
El Salvador, Overseas aid 9w
Employment discrimination, Sexual deviancy 57w
Family income supplements, Islington 101w
Harding, William 75w
Honduras, Refugees 77w
Immigration applications, Sri Lanka 215w
Immigration controls 431
Inner London Education Authority, Adult education 42w
Lembach, Pedro 75-6w
Mercenaries 21w
Police informers, Northern Ireland 1000
Police vehicles, Computers 19w
Political refugees, Sri Lanka 215-6w
Rate support grant penalties, Islington 459w
Retirement pensions, Islington 101w
School leaving, Vocational guidance 57-8w
Social security recipients, Islington 101w
Sri Lanka, British embassies 220-1w
Sri Lanka, Civil disorder 221-2w
Sri Lanka, Entry clearances 221w
Supplementary benefits, Islington 101w
Tamils, Amnesty International 282w
Tamils, Entry clearances 283w
Tamils, Sri Lanka 282-3w

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Public petitions (07.06.85) 592
Water pollution, Norman Shaw Building (06.06.85) 453
Questions
Business statement 444-5

Corporate plans
Housing corporation 516w

Corrie, Mr John
Questions
List D schools, Scotland 253-4w

Cost benefit analysis
Tree planting 263w

Cost effectiveness 474-5w

Cost per pupil
Education 217-8w

Cost per student
Higher education 27-8w

Costain Homes 316w

Couchman, Mr James
Debates etc
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1043, 1076-8
Questions
Metropolitan Police, Pay 1008

Council house sales 459w, 511w
Administrative delays 517w
Bolton 887
Income 455w
Northern Ireland 534-5w
Southwark 517w

Council house waiting lists
Board & lodging charges 513w
Social security recipients 513w

Council housing
Ethnic minorities 460w
Greater London Council 35-6w
Housing improvement 204w, 266-7w
London boroughs 32w

Council of Ministers 78-9w
Tourism 12w

Councillors
Local government reform 514w

Countryside Commission
Finance 886-7

Cowans, Mr Harry
Questions
Housing standards 883-4

Cox, Mr Tom
Questions
Council housing, London boroughs 32w
Domestic rates 266w
Electricity (Factories Act) Special Regulations, 1908, Prosecutions 572w
Foreign patients, Income 95w
Free ports, Gems 501w
Industrial safety, Prosecutions 573w
VAT, EC external trade 501w
VAT, Imports 500-1w

Craigavon bridge 541-2w

Craigen, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 346-7, 349, 369-71, 376-7
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 105-8
Questions
Nuclear non proliferation treaty 528w
Rate rebates, Scotland 252w

Cranborne, Viscount
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 915, (13.06.85) 1039-40
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 784-6
Questions
Water pollution, Nitrates 890

Cremation
Medical certificates 361w

Crime
Ulster Defence Regiment 143

Crime prevention
Departmental coordination 300w
Lighting 492w

Crime victims
Compensation 206w

Crimes of violence
Prisoners 498-9w

Criminal damage
Greater Manchester 18-9w

Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 (03.06.85) 21-33

Criminal proceedings
Director of Public Prosecutions 296-7w
Export licensing 499w

Criminal records
Child care 497-8w
Sexual offences 210w

Criminal statistics 424-5
Greater Manchester 18w

Crisis management 143w
Ministry of Defence 143w

Croham directive 431w

Crop spraying 100w, 274-6w, 356w, 380w, 579-81w
Fenitrothion 580-1w
Health hazards 100w
Pollution 356w
Safety measures 380w
Scotland 274-6w

Cross border cooperation in Ireland 248w, 438, 536w, 996-8, 1002-4

Crouch, Mr David
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 573, 583-6
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1134
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85, Public petitions (07.06.85) 604-5
Questions
Business statement 442
Middle East, Peace negotiations 750
Nuclear power stations 4

Crown courts
Administrative delays 633-4
Waiting lists 255-6w

Crown immunity 737-8

Crown Suppliers 32w
Motor vehicles 32w

Crowther, Mr Stan
Questions
Non-domestic rates 294-5

Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 207w

Cruise missile sites
Military exercises 424w
Safety 147w

Cruise missiles
Dual key control 562w
Military exercises 562w

Cumbernauld
Supplementary benefits 235w

Cumbria
Land acquisition 258w
Local government corruption 111w, 128w
Rights of way 410w

Cunningham, Dr John
Questions
Asbestos, Waste disposal 880-1
Central-local government relations, Dept of Health & Social Security 543w
Central-local government relations, Dept of the Environment 310w
Central-local government relations, Dept of Transport 375w
Central-local government relations, Home Office 382w
Central-local government relations, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 291w
Central-local government relations, Treasury 392w
Consultative Council on Local government Finance 309-10w, 410-1w
Education, Central-local government relations 465w
House renovation grants 889
Radioactive waste disposal, RAF Chivenor 467w

Radioactive waste disposal, Yelland Power Station 563w
Water supply, Households 310w

Curlew geese 412w

Curriculum 417w
Mathematics education 416w
Religious education 331w
Science education 416w
Vocational education 416-7w

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Debates etc
Handicapped (10.06.85) 672
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1136
Social security (03.06.85) 47
Questions
Family practitioner services, Fees & charges services 475-6w
House renovation grants 879

Customs & Excise
Computer staff 249-50w
Computers in government departments 251w
Confiscated goods 69-70w
Documents 70-3w
Drug crimes 393w

Customs & Excise Management Act 1979 70-3w

Cycleways 625-6
Northern Ireland 367-8w

Cycling 625-6

C-Poultry Company Limited Bill 1984/85 (06.06.85) 423
3R* (03.06.85) 1

Dairy farming
Northern Ireland 537w, 1009-10
Wales 557w

Dalkon shield 473w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 322
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 546
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 898, (13.06.85) 1056-9
Eurolex, Mergers (07.06.85) 564, 565
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 768
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1026, 1155, 1157, 1168, 1172, 1179, 1181, 1188, 1190
Questions
Armed forces visits, Chile 423-4w
British Leyland, Goods vehicles 292
Business statement 446, 1016
Chile, Arms embargoes 409w
Chile, Human rights 409w
Chile, National territory 409w
Exservicemen, Convictions 304w
Fairey Engineering, Contracts for advanced technology 455w
Falkland Islands, Fisheries 388w
General Belgrano 145w
Government Communications Headquarters, Industrial relations 406w
Government Communications Headquarters, Privatisation 511w
Industry, Educational finance 167w
Legal aid, Scotland 446w
Ministry of Defence, Official secrets 305w
Mount Pleasant Airport, Expenditure 161w
Nicaragua, Official secrets 436w
Press briefings, Television 302w

Data banks
Small businesses 175w

Data networks 190w

Data Protection Act 1984 5-6w, 207w, 442w
Local government 442w

Data Protection Committee 5-6w

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 910-9, 920, 923
Questions
Defence arms control unit 138-9
Ministry of Defence, Official cars 138
Nuclear artillery shells 142-3

Davies, Mr Ron
Questions
Acid rain, Environment protection 294w
Acid rain, Power stations 318w
Air pollution, Exhaust emissions 314w
Air pollution, Fossil fuels 313w
Crop spraying, Safety measures 380w
Firearms 155-6w
Firearms certificates 155-6w
Forestry grants, Blaen-y-Cwm 168w
Forests 54-5w
Forests, Research 350w
Forests, Sites of special scientific interest 55w
Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Disclosure of information 356w
Intervention stocks, Wales 130w
Law reports, Open government 156w
NHS, Privatisation 198w
Nitrogen oxides, Oil refineries 313w
Pesticides, Dieldrin 355w
Skimmed milk powder, Bedwas 131w
Sulphur dioxide, Oil refineries 314w
Tree felling, Agricultural land 444w
Tree felling, Licensing 219w, 251-2w, 444w
Tree felling, Wales 199w
Tree planting 166w, 198-9w, 219w
Tree planting, Forestry grants 166w
Trees, Acid rain 532-3w
Water supply, Aluminium 314-6w

Davis, Mr Terry
Debates etc
Rate increases, Public petitions (07.06.85) 593-4
Questions
Landor Cartons, Dismissal 405w
Nurses, Pay 436

DDT 579w

Deaf
Medical treatments 184w
Teachers 163w
Television programmes 210w

Deakins, Mr Eric
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1029
Questions
EC budget 65w
Common agricultural policy 289w
Domestic rates, Waltham Forest 315w
Handicapped, Social security reviews 139w
Local government reform, Voluntary organisations 34w

Death
Breast cancer 430w
Industrial accidents 278-82w
Macrae, William 310w, 533w
Reyes syndrome 182-3w
Unemployed 360w

Death grants 478-9w

Debts
Greater London Council 411-2w
VAT 499w

Decommissioning grants
Fishing vessels 90-1w

Deer (Firearms etc) (Scotland) Order 1985 (10.06.85) 639

Defective housing 40-2w, 49w, 204w, 349w, 516-7w, 881
Building repairs 881-2
Departmental circulars 40-2w
Newton Aycliffe 632-3
Official publications 516-7w

Defence
Europe 148w
Labour Party 753-4
Technology transfer 565w

Defence arms control unit 138-9, 147w

Defence contracts
Helicopters 149w
NATO 148w
Training aircraft 62-4w
Tucano aircraft 305w
Warships 503w

Defence equipment
Chemical weapons 148
Chile 467w

Defence estimates 269-70w, (12.06.85) 895-984, (13.06.85) 1035-115

Defence expenditure (12.06.85) 895-984, (13.06.85) 1035-115
Falkland Islands 140-1
NATO 466-8w

Defence land 61-2w
Armed forces training 257-8w

Defence procurement 149
Aish & Company 145w
Guided weapons 145w
Ministry of Defence 424w
Training aircraft 304w

Defence research
Civil defence 209w

Defence Sales Organisation 259w

Deficit grants (04.06.85) 245-79

Deloitte Haskins & Sells 468w

Demergers 439-40w

Democratic Popular Movement 75w

Demolition
Divis flats 245w

Demonstrations
Northern Ireland 996-7
Trafalgar Square 216w

Dental Estimates Board 427w

Dental health
Lost working days 97w

Dental services
Costs 98w
Preventive medicine 97w
Prisons 495-7w

Dental students
Higher education admission 510w
Scotland 533w

Dental technicians
NHS & private practice 389w
Scotland 347w
Wales 389w

Dentistry
Medical education 510w
Patients 98w

Dentures 427w

Department of Health & Social Security
Judgments 382w, 392w

Departmental circulars
Defective housing 40-2w

Departmental coordination
Arms control 138
Coastal protection 151w
Crime prevention 300w
Energy conservation 129w

Departmental forms
Social security abuse 181w

Departmental publications
Armagh Prison 153w
Civil defence 283-4w
Costs 156-7w
Dept of Health & Social Security 358w
Housing Defects Act 1984 349w
Languages 358w
Motorways 156-7w

Deportation
Libyan Peoples Bureau 442w

Dept of Agriculture & Fisheries for Scotland 166w

Dept of Education & Science
Cash limits 336w, 511-2w
House of Commons questions 29-30w

Dept of Employment
Cash limits 123w
House of Commons questions 55w

Dept of Energy
House of Commons questions 23-4w
Management consultants 23w

Dept of Health & Social Security
Central-local government relations 543w
Civil servants political activities 106w
Computer staff 140w
Departmental publications 358w
House of Commons questions 99w
Industrial disputes 140w
Judgments 310w, 543w
Social security abuse 224w

Dept of Health & Social Security local offices
Ethnic minorities 590w
Social security payments 591w

Dept of the Environment
Cash limits 124w
Central-local government relations 310w
Computers in government departments 53w, 127w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 46-8w
House of Commons questions 39-40w
Management consultants 54w

Dept of Trade & Industry
House of Commons questions 13-4w

Dept of Transport
Central-local government relations 375w
House of Commons questions 3w

Derbyshire
Unemployment 353-4w

Derelict land
Land reclamation 459w
North West region 514w

Detention centres 434
Scotland 349-50w
Young offenders 213w

Development aid
Gibraltar 297w

Development Board for Rural Wales
Finance 92w

Development plans
Mater Hospital 246w

Devon Ray 90-1w

Devonport dockyard 503-4w
Apprentices 503w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc
Family Law (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep & 3R (03.06.85) 113-7, 121, 122-3
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 67-74, 85, 102, 106, 109
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 334-7, 346, 347, 350-1, 356-9, 361, 367-8, 369, 377-8, 380

Diabetes
Disposable syringes 365w
Ethnic minorities 429-31w
Food labelling 291-2w
Health service staff 365w

Diaries 295-6w
HMS Conqueror 295-6w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 253, 268, 272-3
Higher education (04.06.85) 208, 210, 213
Nurses, Pay (04.06.85) 280-81
Questions
Civil service, Pay 17-8
International Find a Child Organisation, Government assistance 302w
International Find a Child Organisation, Inquiries 296w
Palace of Westminster, Boats 14
Tate, John, Incest 296w

Dicks, Mr Terry
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 314
Sri Lanka, Political refugees (03.06.85) 55
Questions
Arts, Government grants 169w
Football, Government grants 161-2w
Immigrants, Sri Lanka 155w
Immigrants sponsors, Tamils 154-5w
Prisons, Sports facilities 382w

Dieldrin
Pesticides 355w

Diet & disease
Artificial sweeteners 106w

Dikko, Umaru 208w
Political refugees 208w

Diminished responsibility 443w
Judgments 443w

Dioxin
Pesticides 289-90w

Diplomatic immunity 488-9w

Director of Public Prosecutions
Criminal proceedings 296-7w

Directors
Post Office 391w
Private companies 390-1w

Dirty protests 472w

Disadvantaged
Health services 367w

Disaster relief
Africa 638
Ethiopia 297w, 636
Fees & charges 134-5w
Operation Roadrunner 558w
Overseas aid 636-8

Disasters
Civil defence 206-7w

Disciplinary proceedings 9w

Disclosure of information
Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 356w
Local government reform 515w
Nicaragua 9w
Nigeria 270w
Official secrets 388w
Overseas Development Administration 436w
Plutonium 295w
Police records 207w, 284w

Discounts
Drugs 142-3w

Dismissal
Coal mining 8, 12-3, 20
Landor Cartoons 405w
Unemployment benefits 405w

Dispensing doctors 142-3w
Inquiries 142-3w

Disposable syringes
Diabetes 365w

District health authorities
Managers 140w
Privatisation 481-6w

Divis flats 245w
Asbestos 245-6w
Demolition 245w
Housing improvement 245w

Dixon, Mr Don
Questions
Wages councils, Trade unions 399w

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1147, 1184-7
Questions
Antenatal clinics 232w
Cancer, Screening 233w
Cervical cancer, Screening 101-2w
Child benefit, Industrial workers 233w
Children, Accidents 592w
Community health services, Expenditure 231w
Construction, Safety measures 203-4w
Contraceptives, Licensing 549w
Contraceptives, Safety 549w
Cooklin, Shirley, Ministers correspondence 562w
Criminal statistics 424-5
Educational health services 232w
Educational health services, Expenditure 232w
Educational health services, Statistics 229-30w
Express coach services 627
Family practitioner committees, Computers in National Health Service 234-5
Food, Household surveys 219w
Food labelling, Sugar 579w
Free school meals, Social security reviews 419w
Greater London Enterprise Board, Finance 51w
Health, Social class 230w, 367w
Health service staff, Pay 6w, 552w,
Hospitals, Management 563w
Housing improvement, Local government 204w
Hypertension, Screening 233w
Industrial accidents, Death 278-82w
Industrial health & safety 201w
Industrial health & safety, Orders & regulations 201w
Inner city areas, Social problems 204w
Junior hospital doctors, Contracts of employment 587w
Junior hospital doctors, Pay 587w
Junior hospital doctors, Working hours 588w
Legionnaires disease, Medical research 144w
Marques, Shipping accidents 582w
NHS Management Board, Public appointments 547-8w
Nutrition & health 289w
Pay review bodies, Pay 512w
Pearce, Idris 513w
Pearce, Idris, Conflict of interests 548-9w
Pearce, Idris, Pay 548w
Peel hospital, Pay beds 351w
Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority, Privatisation 300w
Primary health care, Inner London boroughs 234w
Private hospitals, Planning permission 360-1w
Rent control, Private rented housing 884
Research 232-3w
School meals 419w
School meals, Prices 419w
Slum clearance 204w
Social services, Health services 230-1w
Surgery, Infectious diseases 549w

Dockyards 503-4w
Privatisation 147w

Doctors
Social security recipients 427-8w

Doctors list of patients
Bed & breakfast accommodation 427-8w

Doctors surgeries 225w

Documents
Customs & Excise 70-3w

Dogs
Armed forces training 60-1w

Dolphins 203w

Domestic appliances
Italy 17w

Domestic rates 266w
Scotland 414-5w
Waltham Forest 315w

Dooge Report 434-5

Dormand, Mr Jack
Questions
Coal mining, Environment protection 459w
Coal mining, Northern region 6-7
Cycling 626
Income tax, Social security benefits 284w
Industrial research, Regional planning & development 173w

Dorrell, Mr Stephen
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 567-70, 582
Questions
Exchange rates 287

Dorset
Environment protection 877
Planning permission (12.06.85) 985-94
Property development (12.06.85) 985-94

Douglas, Mr Dick
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 900, 908, 922, (13.06.85) 1054, 1064-6, 1102
Questions
Coal mining 22-3w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Debates etc
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 74-7
Questions
Average earnings 301w
Dental students, Higher education admission 510w
Dental students, Scotland 533w
Dentistry, Medical education 510w
Edinburgh Dental Hospital 349w, 533-4w
Edinburgh District Council, Public Inquiries 444w
Friarton Young Offenders Institution, Self-mutilation 350w
Friarton Young Offenders Institution, Suicide 349-50w
Housing Defects Act 1984, Departmental publications 349w
McGuigan, Barry 750
Rate rebates, Scotland 351w
Teachers, Scotland 349w

Dounreay
Nuclear power stations 11-2

Dover, Mr Den
Questions
Air travel, Heathrow 266w
Airlines, Heathrow 266w
Construction, Heathrow 266w
North sea, Ships 275w

Dowty Rotol 145w

Draize test 86w
Animal experiments 86w

Driving licences
Lorry drivers 583-4w
Medical examinations 583-4w

Driving offences
Glue sniffing 581w

Driving tests 374w
Administrative delays 367w
Kent 582w
Motorcycles 581-2w
Northern Ireland 367w
Waiting lists 581-2w

Drug abuse 386-7w, 433-4, 1007
Benzodiazepines 226w
Medical treatments 592w
Police 208w
Sussex 592w

Drug crimes 215-7w, 433-4, 1007
Civil service manpower 393w
Coastguard 377-8w
Customs & Excise 393w
Extradition 441-2w

Drugs
Benzodiazepines 283w
Discounts 142-3w
Expenditure 362-3w
Patents 327w
Price differences 359w
Price reductions 363w
Quality control 96w
Testing 95-6w, 102w

du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85.) 937-42
Questions
House of Commons questions, Public Accounts Commission 10-1w

Dual key control
Cruise missiles 562w

Dublin Summit 194-5w

Dubs, Mr Alfred
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 569
Sri Lanka, Political refugees (03.06.85) 52-3
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85, Public petitions (07.06.85) 596
Questions
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 1002-3
Immigration rules, European Court of Human Rights 428
Members allowances, Members secretaries 15-6
Mentally disturbed offenders 494w
Political refugees, Tamils 424
Public order policing, Stonehenge 281w
Public sector housing, Housing starts 42w
Secondary education, Wandsworth 257w
Stonehenge 269w
Water cannon, Police equipment 20w
Water cannon, Testing 19-20w

Duffy, Mr A E P
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 975-80
Questions
Ulster Defence Regiment Crime 143

Dundee
Community programme 415w

Dunn, Mr Bob, Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science
Debates etc
Young people (11.06.85) 840-2
Questions
Curriculum 417w
Education, Cost per pupil 217-8w
Education Act 1981, Local education authorities 330w
Education & industry 416w
Free school meals, Social security reviews 419w, 504-5w
International Year of the Child, Government grants 29w
Local education authorities 417-9w
Lower attaining pupils 335w
Mathematics education, Curriculum 416w
Metallic marker pens, Schools 504w
Primary education, Teacher training 569w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Rudolf Steiner schools 465w
Religious education, Curriculum 331w
Religious education, Secondary education 330-1w
School leaving 570w
School meals 419w
School meals, Costs 505w
School meals, Prices 419w
School population 505-6w
Science education 332w
Secondary education, Grammar schools 569-70w
Secondary education, Wandsworth 257w
Sex discrimination, Inner London Education Authority 466w
Special education, Administrative delays 506w
Special education, Professional qualifications 505w
Special education, School population 506-10w
Teacher training 164w
Teacher training, Church schools 509w
Teacher training, Educational qualifications 163w
Teacher training, Ethnic minorities 164w
Teacher training, Plymouth 509w
Teacher training, Polytechnic of North London 163w
Teacher training, Rudolf Steiner schools 465-6w
Teachers, Deaf 163w
Teachers Superannuation Working Party 330w
Teachers Superannuation Working Party, Public appointments 329w
Vocational education, Curriculum 416-7w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 309-10, 316
Questions
Air safety, Testing 150w
British Rail, Capital investment 158w
Oxford Circus Station, Fires 380w, 530-1w, 583w, 629
Passenger transport executives, Expenditure 159-60w
Passenger transport executives, Passengers 157-8w
Railway sidings, Government grants 157-8w
Road construction, Channel tunnel 156w
Roads, Motorways 380w

Durham City Council Bill (HL) 1984/85
2R* (03.06.85) 1

Durham Prison 560-1w

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1030-1
Questions
Artificial sweeteners 130w
Diet & disease, Artificial sweeteners 106w

Eadie, Mr Alexander
Debates etc
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 247, 250-3, 276
Questions
Coal mining, Dismissal 20
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 9-10

Ealing
European Communities 169w

Ear disorders
Medical experiments 225w

Early retirement
Company pensions 590w

Earned income
West Midlands 67w, 251w

Earnings related supplement
State earnings related pension scheme 240-1w, 591w

East Midlands
Community programme 398w
Support for innovation scheme 174-5w

Eastern Europe
Air transport 622
EC external trade 518-9w

Eastham, Mr Ken
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 323
Questions
British Rail, Locomotives 623-4
Coal mining, Dismissal 12
Council house sales, Bolton 887
Health & Safety Executive, Finance 405w
Industrial training 293
Law centres 633

EC accession
Portugal 528-9w
Spain 390w, 528-9w

EC action
Airlines 157w
Coastal shipping 375-6w
Food labelling 291w
Industrial democracy 397w

Noise control 437w
Parental leave 352w
Product liability 261-2w
Sugar beet 420w
Tax harmonisation 113w

EC Agricultural Council 519w
Ministerial statements (13.06.85) 1025-32

EC budget 65w, 299w, 388w
European Commission 513w

EC budget contributions
EC budget (14.06.85) 1124

EC Budget Council 65-6w

EC countries
Foreign husbands 442-3w
Housing construction 268w
Immigration controls 442-3w
Imports 454w
Social security payments 479-81w
Student numbers 25-6w
Unemployment 170-2w

EC Draft R/2237/76 261-2w

EC Draft 10322/82 522-3w

EC Draft 11118/83 201w, 352w

EC external relations
Central America 223w
Nicaragua 222w

EC external trade
Agricultural surpluses 518-9w
Confectionery 131-2w
Eastern Europe 518-9w
Food surpluses 292-3w
VAT 501w

EC grants & loans 90w
Exports subsidies 293-4w

EC integration 434-5

EC Internal Market Council 261-2w

EC internal trade
Non-tariff barriers 178w

EC trade
Nicaragua 193w

EC Trade Mark Office 169w, 491w

Economic sanctions
USA 222w, 408w

Economic situation
Northern region 458w

Edinburgh Dental Hospital 349w, 533-4w

Edinburgh District Council 444w
Public inquiries 444w

Education
Central-local government relations 465w
Cost per pupil 217-8w

Education Act 1944 331w

Education Act 1981 330w
Local education authorities 330w

Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups Committee of Inquiry 164w

Education & industry 416w

Educational exchanges
Teachers 164-5w
USA 164-5w

Educational finance
Engineering education 167w
Higher education 333-4w
Industry 167w
Investment returns 332-4w
Northern Ireland 138w
Polytechnics 218w
Scotland 447-8w
Western Europe 447-8w

Educational health services 232w
Expenditure 232w
Statistics 229-30w

Educational qualifications
Teacher training 163w

Educational standards 416w

Edwards Committee see Community Nursing Services in Wales Review

Edwards, Rt Hon Nicholas, *Secretary of State for Wales*
Debates etc
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 180, 198-202
Questions
Agricultural workers, Wales 557-8w
Coal mining, Wales 449w
Government assistance to industry, Wales 92w
House of Commons questions, Welsh Office 91w
Mid Wales development 558w
Milk, Production quotas 557w
Milk, Wales 93w
Sheep scab, Wales 557w
Sheep worrying, Wales 91w
Skimmed milk powder, Bedwas 131w
Stray dogs 389w
Welsh Office, Cash limits 264w
Welsh Office, Civil servants background 91-2w

Eggar, Mr Tim
Questions
Banks, Tony 437
Black economy, Building industry 500w
Building societies 248-50w
Royal ordnance factories, Enfield 143-4w
Tax yields, Building industry 501w
VAT registration, Building industry 500w
VAT registration, Punishment 500w
Water authorities, Privatisation 455-6w

El Salvador 63w
Armed forces officers 77w
Elections 307-8w
Overseas aid 9w

Elderly
Health services 100w
Home helps 102-3w
Hospital beds 103w
Housing completions 43w
Lancashire 476w, 584-6w
Opposition days (06.06.85) 460-96
Population distribution 99-100w
Scotland 80-1w

Elections
El Salvador 307-8w
Northern Ireland 1005-6
Proof of identity 1005-6

Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985 537w, 1005-6

Electoral reform
Local government elections 210w

Electrical safety
Caravan sites 445-6w

Electricity
Industrial safety 572-3w

Electricity generation
Water 275-6w

Electricity tariffs 12

Electricity (Factories Act) Special Regulations 1908 572-3w

Electricity (Factories Act) Special Regulations 1944 573w

Electricity (Factories Act) Special Regulations 1908
Prosecutions 572w

Embassies
Bombings 385w
Syrian Arab Republic 385w, 488-9w

Emergency Provisions (Northern Ireland) Acts 83w

Emery, Sir Peter
Questions
Air transport, Western Europe 623
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 12-3
House of Commons procedure 15

Employers associations
Youth training scheme 400w

Employers attitudes
Occupational pensions 431w

Employers statutory sick pay scheme 546w
Costs 585w

Employment
Clothing industry 390w
Young people 332-3w

Employment Act 1980 574-8w

Employment Act 1982 356w, 397w
Industrial democracy 356w

Employment discrimination
Northern Ireland 1004-5
Sexual deviancy 57w

Employment level 393-7w, 742-3
Northern Ireland 368w
Part-time employment 396w
Self-employed 396w
Statistics 741-2
Tameside 353w

Employment opportunities 354w, 1009
Expenditure 122w
Falkland Islands 559-60w
Junior hospital doctors 224w
London Docklands Development Corporation 410w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate 277w
Regional aid 452w
Shipbuilding 453w
Trident 146w

Employment schemes 402w
Expenditure 122w

Empty housing
Housing improvement 266-7w

Enduring Powers of Attorney Bill (HL) 1984/85
Rep 3R (11.06.85) 846

Energy analysis 13-4

Energy conservation
Departmental coordination 129w
Voluntary organisations 22w

Energy costs
Wave power 526-7w

Energy forecasting
Alternative energy 526w

Energy research
Alternative energy 525-6w
Wave power 527w
Wind power 5

Enfield
Royal ordnance factories 143-4w

Engineering education
Educational finance 167w
Finance 511-2w
Graduates 504w
Higher education 127-8w

Enterprise Ulster 1006-7
Finance 1006-7

Entry clearances 21-2w
Codes of practice 206w
Indian subcontinent 213w
Sri Lanka 216w, 221w
Tamils 283w

Environment
Pesticides 89w

Environment protection
Acid rain 294w
Coal mining 439w
Dorset 877
Food contamination (10.06.85) 687-728
Lockton 876-7
South East region 877

Environment Select Committee 311-2w

"Environment Select Committee on Radioactive Waste" 311-2w

Environment Pollution Royal Commission 311-2w

Equal opportunities
British Rail 631

Equal opportunities officers
Government departments 18

Ethiopia
Disaster relief 297w, 636
Food aid 436w, 634-5
Food aid from UK 134-5w
Lorries 558w
Road transport 636
Vehicles 636

Ethnic minorities
Civil service recruitment 590w
Council housing 460w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 590w
Diabetes 429-31w
Local government social services 586w
Pensioners 366w, 586w
Philippines 107w
Teacher training 164w

Europassport
Gibraltar 170w

Europe
Defence 148w

European Commission
Administrative costs 499w
Audit 499w
EC budget 513w
Expenditure 499w
Manpower 499w
Redundancy 502w
Redundancy pay 536w

European Communities
Ealing 169w

European Communities (Finance) Bill 1984/85 1R (14.06.85) 1124

EC aid
Bananas 222w

EC law
Industrial noise 522-3w
Motor insurance 412-3w
Parental leave 201w

European Court of Human Rights 435w, 749
Immigration rules 427-8
Judgments (03.06.85) 60-1

European Court of Justice
Judgments 491w

European Cup Final 129w

European fighter aircraft 146w

European Foundation
Recruitment 220w

European Regional Development Fund
Textile industry 564w

European Security Conference 69w

Euthanasia
Convictions 22w

Evans, Mr John
Debates etc
Wages councils (06.06.85) 499, 524, 525-6, 529
Questions
British Rail, Locomotives 623
Defence arms control unit 147w
Employment level 395w
National insurance contributions, Prosecutions 365w
State earnings related pension scheme 750
Unemployment 744
Wages Councils Consultation Paper 353w

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
Metropolitan Police, Football 212w
Motor insurance, EC law 412-3w
Piers, River Thames 197w
Wages councils 399w

Evidence
Police powers 212-3w

Ewing, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (05.06.85) 302
Questions
Post Office closures 286-7

Exceptional circumstances additions
Northern Ireland 425w
Supplementary benefits 235w

Exceptional needs payments 550-1w
Cookers 358w
Pensioners 228w
Supplementary benefits 478w

Exchange rates 68w, 287-8

Excise duties
Football 111w

Exercise Brave Defender 424w

Exhaust emissions 626
Air pollution 314w

Exhibitions
Industry & Parliament Trust 261w
Institution of Production Engineers 180w

Explosives
Northern Ireland 247-8w, 471w
Republic of Ireland 247-8w, 260w
Smuggling 260w
Warsaw pact 64w

Export Administration Act (USA) 451-2w

Export controls
Strategic Defence Initiative 451w
Technology transfer 451-2w
USA 407-8w, 451-2w

Export credit
Japan 299-300

Export Credits Guarantee Department
Fraud 132w

Export Credits Guarantee Department Review 454-5w
Management 454-5w

Export licensing
Chemical weapons 175w
Criminal proceedings 499w

Export promotion
Government grants 454w

Export subsidies
EC grants & loans 293-4w
Intervention Board 292-4w
National Economic Development Council 69w

Exports
Pesticides 14w
2 4 5-T 261w

Express coach services 626-8
Safety 628

Exservicemen
Convictions 304w

Extradition
Drug crimes 441-2w
Treaties 441-2w

Eye disorders 481w

Factory closures
British Rail Engineering 371w
British Steel Corporation 176w
Manchester steel (05.06.85) 414-22
Philips 298-9
Railway engineering 371w
Tinsley Park 176w

Factory Inspectorate
West Midlands 172w

Fairbairn, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Family Law (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep & 3R (03.06.85) 113
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 83-6, 88, 94, 110
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 347, 349
Questions
Airports, Scotland 348w

Fairey Engineering 455w,
Contracts for advanced technology 455w

Fairgrounds
Accidents 353w
Injuries 353w

Falkland Islands 140-2, 409w
Airports 141, 161w
Companies 559w
Defence expenditure 140-1
Employment opportunities 559-60w
Fisheries 388w
Housing construction 559w
Investment 560w
Ministers visits abroad 144w
Planning permission 559w
Public appointments 559-60w

Falkland Islands Development Corporation 559-60w
Investment 560w

Fallon, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 245-6, 258-9
Questions
Export Credits Guarantee Department Review, Management 454-5w
New businesses, Northern region 568-9w
Take-up of employment, Northern region 394-5w

Families
Marginal tax rates 550w

Family doctors
Business expenses 141-2w
Part-time employment 224w
Pay 364w
Rural areas 225w

Family income supplements
Children 359w
Islington 101w
Northern Ireland 425w

Family law
Scotland (03.06.85) 113-26

Family Law (Scotland) Bill (HL) 1984/85
Rep & 3R (03.06.85) 113-26

Family practitioner committees 94w
Accounting 94-5w
Computers in National Health Service 234-5w
NHS complaints 433w
Suffolk 93-4w

Family practitioner services
Fees & charges services 475-6w

Far East
Airlines 196-7w
Import penetration 454w
Landing rights 196w

Fares
London docklands railway 379w

Farm Animal Welfare Council 519w

Farm buildings
Cereals 519w

Farms 887

Farr, Sir John
Debates etc
Food & Environment Protection Bill (HL), Rep (10.06.85) 697-8, 699, 702
Questions
Border security in Ireland 535w
Countryside Commission, Finance 886
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 997-8
District health authorities, Privatisation 481-6w

Driving tests, Motorcycles 581-2w
Government assistance to nationalised industries, British Leyland 173w
Police, Manpower 213w
Skilled workers, Clothing industry 398w

Fasiane
Asbestos 50-1w, 124w, 200w, 203w

Fast reactors
Nuclear safeguards 527w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Questions
Federation of Conservative Students 752
Immigration controls, Airline staff 205w
System building, Building repairs 881
Youth unemployment 746-7

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Business question time point of order (13.06.85) 1023
Social security (03.06.85) 50
Water pollution, Norman Shaw Building (06.06.85) 454-5
Questions
Business statement 447-8
Castle Howard, Art works 501-2w
COCOM, Civil servants secondment 527-8w, 565w

Faulkner Committee see Child Care Steering Group

Favell, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 328
Questions
Local radio, Licensing 211w
Non-domestic rates 294
Rates & rating, Unemployment 410w
Wages councils 745

Federation of Conservative Students 752

Fees & charges
Disaster relief 134-5w
Privatisation 439w
Water authorities 312-3w

Fees & charges services
Family practitioner services 475-6w

Fenitrothian 274-6w
Canada 581w
Crop spraying 580-1w

Fenner, Mrs Peggy, *Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
Debates etc
Food & Environment Protection Bill (HL), Rep (10.06.85) 695-6, 698-700, 704-6, 708
Questions
Alachlor, Weedkillers 88w
Animal experiments, Draize test 86w
Animal welfare 519w
Artificial sweeteners 130w
DDT 579w
Fenitrothion, Crop spraying 580-1w
Food, Household surveys 219w
Food additives 130w
Food additives, Research 129w
Food labelling, Carbohydrates 110w
Food labelling, Diabetes 291-2w
Food labelling, EC action 291w
Hedges & ditches, Nature conservation 219w
Land drainage committees 420w
Paraquat, West Germany 422w
Pesticide residues, World Health Organisation 580w
Pesticides, Codes of practice 88-9w
Pesticides, Dioxin 289-90w
Pesticides, Environment 89w
Pesticides, Safety 89w
Pesticides, Safety information 89w
Pigmeat, Food consumption 88w
Sugar beet, Rhizomania 420w
Tree felling, Licensing 219w
Tree planting 219w

Fertilisers
Water pollution 890

Fertility
Clinics 284w
Hospital patients 431w

Anniversaries
William of Orange 490w

Field, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Elderly (06.06.85) 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 482-4, 487
Handicapped (10.06.85) 651, 652, 655
Manchester Steel (05.06.85) 417-8
Social security (03.06.85) 43-4
Wages councils (06.06.85) 521
Questions
British shipbuilders, Occupational pensions 323w
Care proceedings, Child care 552w
Legionnaires disease, Liverpool 106w

Field Heath nurseries 316w

Fields, Mr Terry
Debates etc
Young people (11.06.85) 819-23
Questions
Young people, Social security benefits disqualification 366w

Fife
Youth training scheme 415w

Fife Regional Council 135w
Local government expenditure 135w

Finance Act 1980 439-40w

Financial Management Unit 294w

Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Questions
Air transport, France 622
Civil defence, NATO 211w
Demergers 439-40w
Kampuchea, UN General Assembly 488w

Fire prevention
Sportsgrounds 430

Firearms 155-6w
Northern Ireland 472w, 542w, 553w
SA 80 guns 143-4w

Firearms Act 1968 155-6w

Firearms certificates 155-6w
Northern Ireland 471w, 556w

Firearms Licensing Committee 155-6w

Fires
Bradford City Football Club 153-4
Clifford Hicks Tower 514w
Costs 380w
Hospitals 96w
National Freight Company 521w
Oxford Circus Station 380w, 530-1w, 583w, 629
Sheffield 521w
Underground railways 629

Fish conservation
Coastal fishing 289w
Northern Ireland 554-6w
Scotland 273w

Fisher, Mr Mark
Questions
Computers in government departments, Personal records 5-6w
Elderly, Health services 100w
Higher education, Expenditure 30-1w
Home helps, Elderly 102-3w
Hospital beds, Elderly 103w
House renovation grants 461w
Housing completions, Elderly 43w
Kidney machines 104w
Population projection, Sex distribution 103w
Prisoners on remand 20-1w
Private investment, Manufacturing industries 67-8w
State occupational pensions 104w
Student numbers, Higher education 31w
Unemployment 395w

Fisheries
Falkland Islands 388w

Fishing vessels
Decommissioning grants 90-1w

Flannery, Mr Martin
Questions
British Steel Corporation, Factory closures 176w
Industrial accidents 58-9w
Northern Ireland Government 537w
Police informers, Northern Ireland 1001
St Pancras to Sheffield railway line 371w
Trees 458w
Ulster Defence Regiment 144
Young offenders, Short sharp shock treatment 211w

Fletcher, Mr Alex, *Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry*
Questions
Beer 134w
Consumer protection, Safety 450w
Consumer protection law 324w
House of Fraser, Takeovers 189w, 569w
Insolvency, Liability 178w
Manchester Steel, Takeovers 14w
Metallic marker pens, Hazardous materials 450w
Metallic marker pens, Imports 450-1w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission, Association of British Travel Agents 262-3w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission, British Railways Board 183-4w
Origin marking, Judgments 491w
Pesticides, Exports 14w
Product liability, EC action 261-2w
Riding hats, Standards specifications 15w
Sewers, Property insurance 327w
Small businesses, Audit 134w
Toys & games, Hazardous materials 450w

Flexible rostering
British Rail 374w

Floating exchange rates 287

Fontainebleau Summit 299w, 388w

Food
Household surveys 219w

Food additives 130w
Research 129w

Food Additives & Contaminants Committee 130w

Food aid
Africa 436-7
Ethiopia 436w, 634-5
Sudan 436w

Food aid from EC 194-5w
Africa 195w

Food aid from UK (11.06.85) 761-804
Ethiopia 134-5w

Food consumption
Pigmeat 88w

Food contamination
Environment protection (10.06.85) 687-728

Food hygiene
Hospitals 737-8

Food labelling
Carbohydrates 110w
Diabetes 291-2w
EC action 291w
Imports 291w
Sugar 579w

Food surpluses
EC external trade 292-3w

Food & Drugs Administration (USA) 182w

Food & Environment Protection Bill (HL) 1984/85
Rep (10.06.85) 687-728
89w

Fookes, Miss Janet
Debates etc

Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1059-61
Questions
Devonport Dockyard, Apprentices 503w
Dockyards 503-4w
Drug crimes 433-4
Teacher training, Church schools 509w
Teacher training, Plymouth 509w

Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 311
Social security (03.06.85) 42
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, Private Members Motion (07.06.85) 609-11
Wages councils (06.06.85) 505, 531
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 7
Employment level 742
Social security reviews 152

Football
Excise duties 111w
Government grants 161-2w
Metropolitan Police 212w
Safety 462w
Sportsgrounds 428-30

Football Ground Improvement Trust (03.06.85) 21-33

Football hooliganism 152, 300-1w, 436, 438-40, (11.06.85) 868-74, 876
Government grants 129w
Ministerial statement (03.06.85) 21-33

Football League 462w

Football Safety Review (03.06.85) 21-33

Football Trust (03.06.85) 21-33

Foreign companies in UK 290
Car industry 449-50w

Foreign husbands
EC countries 442-3w

Foreign investment in UK
Government grants 177-8w

Foreign patients
Income 95w

Foreign policy
Chile 75w
Grenada 77w
Namibia 555w

Foreign relations
Greece 136w
Turkey 136w

Foreign trade
Japan 301
Uranium 408-9w
USA 488w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
House of Commons questions 74w

Forestry 166w
Scotland 136w

Forestry Commission
Advisory services 414w

Forestry grant scheme 65w, 414w

Forestry grants 65w, 166w, 168w, 263w
Blaen-y-Cwm 168w
Shielsknowe 166w
Tree planting 166w

Forests 54-5w, 198-9w
Costs 413-4w
Private sector 219w
Research 350w
Scotland 349w
Sites of special scientific interest 55w
Wales 199w

Forman, Mr Nigel
Questions
Business statement 1014-5
Cycling 626
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 636
Unemployment 744

Forsyth, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 322-3
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 91, 94, 97-100
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 336, 338-9, 342, 344
Wages councils (06.06.85) 516
Questions
British Airports Authority, Privatisation 197w
Ethiopia, Food aid from UK 134-5w
Rateable value, Scotland 414-5w
VAT, Debts 499w
Widdicombe Committee 455w

Forsythe, Mr Clifford
Questions
Air routes, Northern Ireland 530w, 538w
Airports, Northern Ireland 539w
Bus services, Privatisation 368w
Cycleways, Northern Ireland 367-8w
Driving tests, Northern Ireland 367w
Road construction, Northern Ireland 367w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Complaints against police 259w
Shares, Northern Ireland 554w
Transport subsidies, Northern Ireland 426w

Forth, Mr Eric
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1032
Questions
British Leyland 291-2
Britoil, Privatisation 562w
Dooge Report 434-5
Lorries, Overloading offences 437-8w
Share ownership, Owner occupied housing 1010
Social security reviews 151-2
Sugar beet, Rhizomania 420w
Top Salaries Review Body 190-2w

Fossil fuels
Air pollution 313w

Foster, Mr Derek
Debates etc
Social security (03.06.85) 46-7
Questions
Law centres 632

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 314
Falkland Islands, Members visits abroad (05.06.85) 330
Family Law (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep & 3R (03.06.85) 114
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 342-3, 345, 349, 365-6, 380
Questions
Business statement 1016
Central America, EC external relations 223w
Central America, Military attaches 308w
Chemical weapons, Defence equipment 148
El Salvador, Elections 307-8w
Ministers domestic visits, Jersey 210w
Nicaragua, Disclosure of information 9w
Overseas Development Administration, Official secrets 388w
Youth unemployment 403w

Fountain Forestry 168w

Fowler, Rt Hon Norman, *Secretary of State for Social Services*
Debates etc
Social security, Ministerial statements (03.06.85) 34-51
Questions
House of Commons questions, Dept of Health & Social Security 99w

Foyle bridge 541-2w

France
Air transport 622
Brewing industry 131w
Coastal shipping 4w

Franks, Mr Cecil
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 326-7
Questions
Law centres 632
Local government corruption, Cumbria 111w, 128w

Fraser, Mr John
Questions
House renovation grants 877-8
Housing benefits, Lambeth 585-6w
Police Federation 206w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Lambeth 128-9w
Retirement pensions, British residents abroad 546w
St Barnabas Community Centre 463-4w
Unemployment, Inner city partnerships 59w
Unemployment, Lambeth 395w
Urban programme, Expenditure 517-8w
Young offenders, Prison sentences 495w

Fraser, Mr Peter, *Solicitor-General for Scotland*
Debates etc
Family Law (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep & 3R (03.06.85) 118-22, 123, 124-5
Questions
House of Commons questions, Solicitor-General for Scotland 10w
Macrae, William, Death 310w

Fraud
Export Credits Guarantee Department 132w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 436w

Free ports
Gems 501w

Free school meals 419w
Social security reviews 419w, 504-5w

Freeman, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Social security (03.06.85) 49

Freeson, Rt Hon Reg
Questions
Temporary immigrants 213w

Freud, Mr Clement
Debates etc
Higher education (04.06.85) 214-6
Questions
Arts sponsorship 7-8w
Free school meals, Social security reviews 504-5w
Graduates, Costs 333-4w
Graduates, Higher education teachers 334w
"Higher Education Consultation Paper", Investment appraisal 332-4w
Housing benefits, Students 364w
Lower attaining pupils 335w
Means tested benefits, Cash limits 362w
School population 505-6w
Science education, Graduates 504w
Science education, Student numbers 334-6w
Social security payments, EC countries 479-81w
Social security reviews, School meals 552w
Special education, Administrative delays 506w
Special education, Professional qualifications 505w
Special education, School population 506-10w
Student grants 335-6w
Supplementary benefits, Students 364w
Teacher training 164w
Teacher training, Educational qualifications 163w
Teacher training, Ethnic minorities 164w
Teacher training, Polytechnic of North London 163w
Teachers, Educational exchanges 164-5w
Teachers, Trade union membership 165w
Temporary employment 521w
Tenants exchange scheme 314w
Tenants exchange scheme, Costs 314w
University Grants Committee, Manpower 509w

Friarton Young Offenders Institution
349-50w
Self-mutilation 350w
Suicide 349-50w

Friends of the Earth 56w

Fry, Mr Peter
Questions
Food additives 130w

Fuel bills 589-90w
Social security benefits rules 589-90w

Funerals
Social security reviews 551-2w

Further education
Age participation rates 328-30w
Staff-student ratios 165w

Further education colleges
Youth training scheme 337-48w

Gainsborough
Prime Minister domestic visits 128w

Gale, Mr Roger
Questions
Business statement 1016-7
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 363-4w

Galley, Mr Roy
Debates etc
Local Authorities (Political Expenditure) Bill, 1R (05.06.85) 331-3
Social Security (03.06.85) 45-6
Questions
Rate demands 323w

Gardline Surveys 467w

Garrett, Mr Ted
Debates etc
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1151, 1175-6
Questions
Employment level 396w

Gas flaring 23w

Gas pipelines
Northern Ireland 246w, 468w, 535w, 553w

Gas supply industry
Northern Ireland 426w, 536w
Privatisation 194w
Redundancy 426w

Gas-cooled reactors
Radioactive wastes 38w

GCE A level
School leaving 570w

Gems
Free ports 501w

General Belgrano 145w, 1008-9

George, Mr Bruce
Debates etc
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1074-6
Questions
HMS Ark Royal 139-40

Geothermal power
Expenditure 525-6w

Gibraltar
Development aid 297w
Europassport 170w
Ministers visits abroad 297w, 306-7w
National insurance 306w
Overseas aid 306w
Tourism 297w

Gifts & endowments
Air pollution control 318w
Trade unions 740

Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Questions
Rates & rating 151

Glaucoma
Moorfields Eye Hospital 141w

Gleneagles agreement 460w

Glue sniffing
Driving offences 581w

Glyn, Dr Alan
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 317
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 963-4
Questions
Gas supply industry, Privatisation 194w
Immigration controls, Political refugees 303w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 552
Questions
Asbestos, Faslane 50w
HMS Otter 62w
Industrial democracy 397w
Judgments, Diminished responsibility 443w

Golding, Mr John
Questions
Job release scheme, Pay 405w
Trade unions, Political levy 739-40

Goodhart, Sir Philip
Debates etc
Young people (11.06.85) 823-5

Goodlad, Mr Alastair, Under-Secretary of State for Energy
Questions
Acid rain, Environment protection 294w
Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary 193w
Electricity generation, Water 275-6w
Electricity tariffs 12
Fast reactors, Nuclear safeguards 527w
Heysham Power Station 4
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Orkney 11
Nuclear power stations 4
Nuclear power stations, Dounreay 11-2
Nuclear power stations, Ministers domestic visits 10-2
Nuclear power stations, Safety 11
Nuclear power stations, Safety standards 275w
Nuclear power stations, Winfrith 11-2
Nuclear safeguards 24w
Nuclear safeguards, Nuclear reactors 295w
Plutonium, Disclosure of information 295w
Plutonium, Members correspondence 571w
Plutonium, Production 295w
Sizewell B, Costs 527w

Goods vehicles
British Leyland 292
Licensing 529w

Goods Vehicles (Operators Licences Qualifications & Fees) Regulations 1984 529w

Gorst, Mr John
Questions
Armed forces local overseas allowance 145
Illegal broadcasting, Prosecutions 189w

Gould, Mr Bryan
Questions
Bosphorus bridge 300
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 294w
British Telecom, Shares 134w, 491-2w
Exchange rates 68w, 287-8
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Fraud 132w
House of Fraser, Takeovers 189w, 569w
Import penetration, Costs 189w
Manufactured goods, UK trade with EC 299
Manufacturing industries, Industrial production 250w
Ministry of Defence, Pay settlements 258-9w
Sri Lanka, Hydroelectric power 391w
Sri Lanka, Overseas aid 407w

Government assistance
International Find a Child Organisation 302w

Government assistance to industry
Iron & steel industry 177w
North West region 174w
Northern Ireland 553w
Northern region 297-8
Shipbuilding 453w
Wales 92w

Government assistance to nationalised industries
British Leyland 173w
Coal mining (04.06.85) 245-79

Government assistance to voluntary organisations
Headway 477-8w

Government Communications Headquarters
Industrial relations 406w

Government Communications Headquarters
Privatisation 511w

Government contracts
Private companies 251w
Small businesses 296-7

Government departments
Equal opportunities officers 18
Manpower 111-2w

Government grants
Alternative energy 525w
Arts 169w
Business in the Community 288
Cereal cooperatives 519w
Export promotion 454w
Football 161-2w
Foreign investment in UK 177-8w
Football hooliganism 129w
Horse racing 161-2w
International Year of the Child 29w
International Youth Year 29w
Land reclamation 459w
Legionnaires disease 144w
Local enterprise agencies 288
Medical Research Council 238-9w
Railway sidings 157-8w
Secret ballot 574-8w
Voluntary Services Unit 208w

Government grants to local authorities
Housing insulation 44-6w
Urban programme 312w

Government grants to voluntary organisations
Breast cancer 430w
Dept of the Environment 46-8w
Mastectomy Association 430w

Government laboratories
Regional planning & development 173w

Gow, Mr Ian, Minister for Housing and Construction
Questions
Building regulations 465w
Clifford Hicks Tower, Fires 514w
Council house sales 459w
Council house sales, Income 455w
Council house sales, Southwark 517w
Defective housing, Departmental circulars 40-2w
Defective housing, Official publications 516-7w
Greater London mobility scheme 52-3w
House renovation grants 461w
Housing corporation, Corporate plans 516w
Infrastructure, Expenditure 455w
Private rented housing 456w
Private rented housing, Rent Acts 456w
System building, Building repairs 881-2
Water authorities, Privatisation 455-6w
Water pollution, Nitrates 890
Water supply industry 461w

Gower, Sir Raymond
Debates etc
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 166, 176, 177-80

Graduates 128w
Costs 333-4w
Engineering education 504w
Higher education teachers 334w
Science education 504w

Grammar schools
Secondary education 569-70w

Grant, Sir Anthony
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 326
Questions
Post Office closures 286

Gravelly Hill viaduct 376-7w
Repairs & maintenance 376-7w

Greater London
Abortion 588w
Buses 413w, 627
Car hire 375w
Community programme 398w
Old peoples homes 544w
Residential care 545-6w
Residuary bodies 317w
Roads 4w

Greater London Council 514w
By elections 457w
Computers 515w
Council housing 35-6w
Debts 411-2w
House of Commons questions 124w
Local government reform 317w, 352w, 411-2w, 437
Local government staff 352w
Piers 197w
Transitional costs 515w

Greater London Enterprise Board 51w
Finance 51w

Greater London mobility scheme 52-3w

Greater Manchester
Criminal damage 18-9w
Criminal statistics 18w

Greater Manchester Bill (HL) 1984/85 (05.06.85) 285
3R order read (04.06.85) 137
Royal Assent (13.06.85) 1067

Greece
Foreign relations 136w

Greenbelt
New towns 161w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 328
Higher education (04.06.85) 207, 208
Sri Lanka, Political refugees (03.06.85) 59
Questions
Animal fighting, Prosecutions 209w, 304w
Business statement 1017
Chemical weapons, USSR 147-8
Chityan, Sergei 271w
Community programme, Home helps 397w
Electricity tariffs 12
European Communities, Ealing 169w
Excise duties, Football 111w
Immigration, Sri Lanka 493w
London Regional Transport, Advertising 629
Palace of Westminster, Boats 14
Prime Minister official engagements 129w, 193w
Prison education services, Prison staff 154w
Riding hats, Standards specifications 15w
Tamils, Political refugees 302-3w
Tourist industry 301-2

Greenwich
Hospital closures 285w

Gregory, Mr Conal
Questions
Consumer protection, Safety 450w
Dental technicians, Scotland 347w
Dental technicians, Wales 389w
Drug crimes 215-7w
Express coach services 627
Hospitals, Food hygiene 738
Metallic marker pens, Hazardous materials 450w
Metallic marker pens, Imports 450-1w
Metallic marker pens, Northern Ireland 553w
Metallic marker pens, Schools 504w
Metallic marker pens, Scotland 445w
Metallic marker pens, Wales 556-7w
Mobility of disabled 373w
Tourism, Council of Ministers 12w
Toys & games, Hazardous materials 450w

Grenada
Foreign policy 77w
Prime Minister 5w

Grenades 168w
RAF Greenham Common 168-9w
RAF Molesworth 63w
USA 168-9w

Griffiths Inquiry see NHS Management Inquiry

Griffiths, Mr Eldon
Debates etc
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 28
Questions
Business statement 1015
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 1004
Sportsgrounds, Safety 430

Griffiths, Mr Peter
Questions
Legionnaires disease, Medical research 126-7w

Grylls, Mr Michael
Questions
Building regulations 411w, 465w
Building regulations, Small businesses 318-23w
PAYE 73w

Guardians ad litem 552w

Guided weapons
Defence procurement 145w
Sea Wolf 145w

Gummer, Mr John Selwyn, Paymaster General
Questions
House of Commons questions, Paymaster-General 82w

Gwynedd Health Authority (07.06.85) 600, 603
Ambulance services (07.06.85) 600, 603

Hamilton, Mr Neil
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1027
Questions
Customs & Excise, Documents 70-3w
Government departments, Manpower 111-2w
Tax collection offices 112w

Hamilton, Mr Willie W
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 921, (13.06.85) 1070-2
Elderly (06.06.85) 485
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85, Public petitions (07.06.85) 595-6
Questions
Business statement 444
Coal closure areas, Scotland 18-9
Japan, Foreign trade 301
NHS, Privatisation 551w
NHS, Scotland 572w
Private Members motions, Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85 437

Hampshire
Skillcentres 578w

Hampson, Dr Keith
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 898, 912, 922-3, 927 (13.06.85) 1098
Higher education (04.06.85) 219
Questions
Defence arms control unit 139

Hancock, Mr Michael
Questions
Further education, Staff-student ratios 165w
Rehabilitation centres 406-7w
Rehabilitation centres, Manpower 406w
Science education 332w
Skillcentres, Hampshire 578w
Trade unions, Secret ballot 574-8w
Unemployment 577-8w
Unemployment, Portsmouth 577w

Handicapped 171-2w
Health services 102w
Opposition days (10.06.85) 640-86
Social security reviews 139w

Handicapped workers 738-9
Codes of practice 738

Hanley, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc
Sri Lanka, Political refugees (03.06.85) 56
Questions
Business statement 443
Dept of Education & Science, Cash limits 336w
London buses, Procurement 158-9w
Trade union elections 401w

Hannam, Mr John
Questions
Community programme, South West region 398w
Drug crimes 1007
Energy analysis 13-4
Prescription charges exemptions 432w

Harding, William 75w

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 249, 265, 266-70
Questions
Business statement 1018
House renovation grants, Rotherham 879
Housing improvement, Expenditure 462w
Special steels, Monopoly 173-4w
Tree felling, Licensing 446w
Unemployment 396w

Hargreaves, Mr Ken
Questions
Nature conservation, Poultry 412w

Harman, Ms Harriet
Questions
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Homelessness 267w
Elderly, Lancashire 584-6w
Old peoples homes, Lancashire 544w
Pensioners, Ethnic minorities 366w, 586w
Residential care, Lancashire 476w
Unemployment benefits, Southwark 106w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1031
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 162
Questions
Business statement 444
Coastal protection, Supply estimates 151w

Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Debates etc
Water pollution, Norman Shaw Building (06.06.85) 454
Questions
House of Commons division bells 306w
House of Commons Refreshment Department, Bottled water 534w
Motorway service areas, Telephone systems 375w
M1, Motorway service areas 581w
M62, Motorway service areas 3w

Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Debates etc
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 776-9, 799
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1127, 1155-60
Questions
Ethiopia, Food aid 635
Nicaragua, Overseas aid 297w

Hartlepool
Single homeless 584w

Harvey, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 188-90
Questions

Gibraltar, Ministers visits abroad 297w

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 311-2

Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael, Attorney-General
Questions
Crown courts, Waiting lists 255-6w
Director of Public Prosecutions, Criminal proceedings 296-7w
Fraud, Northern Ireland Housing Executive 436w
HMS Conqueror, Diaries 295-6w
House of Commons questions, Attorney-General 1-2w
Illegal broadcasting, Prosecutions 189w
International Find a Child Organisation, Inquiries 296w
Judges 633-4
"Killing for Company", Prosecutions 189w
Law centres 631-3
Law Society, Coopers & Lybrand Associates 555-6w
Local government corruption, Cumbria 111w
Overseas Development Administration, Official secrets 388w
Public Records Office, Cash limits 556w
Racial discrimination, Tribunals 435w
Tate, John, Incest 296w
Transport & General Workers Union, Trade union elections 2w

Hawkins, Sir Paul
Debates etc
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1103

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 321
Questions
British Airports Authority, Privatisation 413w
Metropolitan Police, Overtime 425

Hayhoe, Mr Barney, Minister of State for the Treasury
Questions
Black economy, Building industry 500w
Civil servants, Re-employment 502w
Civil service, Legal profession 438-40w
Civil service, Pay 17-8
Civil service, Travelling expenses 67w
Civil service unions 9w, 17
Customs & Excise, Computer staff 249-50w
Customs & Excise, Computers in government departments 251w
Customs & Excise, Confiscated goods 69-70w
Customs & Excise, Documents 70-3w
Customs & Excise, Drug crimes 393w
Equal opportunities officers, Government departments 18
European Security Conference 69w
Excise duties, Football 111w
Export licensing, Criminal proceedings 499w
Free ports, Gems 501w
House of Commons questions, Civil service 7-9w
House of Commons questions, Treasury 66w
Inland Revenue, Industrial disputes 18
Management consultants, Management & Personnel Office 8w
Tax harmonisation, EC action 113w
Tax yields, Building industry 501w
VAT, Administrative costs 294w
VAT, Debts 499w
VAT, EC external trade 501w
VAT, Imports 263w, 500-1w
VAT, Tax thresholds 393w
VAT registration, Building industry 500w
VAT registration, Punishment 500w

Hayling Island 579-80w
Coastal protection 579-80w

Haynes, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 259-62
Handicapped (10.06.85) 682-3
Questions
Committee on Safety of Medicines 108-10w
Local government aid to industry 296
Wages councils, Part-time employment 747-8

Hayward, Mr Rob
Questions
Energy conservation, Voluntary organisations 22w

Hazardous materials
Metallic marker pens 450w
Schools 553w, 556-7w
Toys & games 450w
Wood preservatives 578-9w

Hazardous Waste Inspectorate 162-3w, 269w, 516w

Hazardous wastes 516w
Health & Safety Executive 516w
Pollution control 49w
Waste disposal 162-3w, 269w

Hazards
House of Commons terrace (07.06.85) 607

House of Commons division bells 306w

House of Commons Refreshment Department 534w

House of Commons standing committees
Speakers rulings & statements (06.06.85) 457

House of Commons terrace (07.06.85) 607

Head injuries 477-8w

Headway
Government assistance to voluntary organisations 477-8w

Health
Social class 230w, 367w
Unemployment 359w

Health education
Pesticides 56w

Health Education Council
Publicity 592w

Health hazards
Crop spraying 100w
Natural radioactivity 543-4w
Schools 504w

Health service staff 224w
Diabetes 365w
Infectious diseases 226-7w
Pay 6w, 552w
Repairs & maintenance 360w

Health services
Abortion 429w
Disadvantaged 367w
Elderly 100w
Handicapped 102w
Social services 230-1w

Health Services Act 1980 360-1w
Planning permission 360-1w

Health warnings
Contraceptives 473w

Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 356w
Disclosure of information 356w

Health & Safety Executive
Air pollution control 171w
Civil service dispersal 278w
Finance 405w
Hazardous wastes 516w
Mercury 276w

Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David
Questions
Attendance allowance, Automatic credit transfer 223w
Black economy 742-3
Commercial television 213-4w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 1004-5
Immigration rules 431-2
Shorthold tenancies 458w

Heathrow (05.06.85) 307-29, 583w
Air travel 266w
Airlines 266w
Construction 266w

Heating
Pensioners (12.06.85) 893-5

Heddle, Mr John
Debates etc
Sanitaryware, Belgium (10.06.85) 734-5
Questions
Coal mining, Subsidence 409w
Council house sales 511w
Industry, Privatisation 172w
System building, Building repairs 881-2
VAT, Administrative costs 294w

Hedges & ditches
Nature conservation 219w

Heffer, Mr Eric S
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 569, 572, 579
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 899, 946-8, (13.06.85) 1041
Elderly (06.06.85) 461, 470, 473
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 25-6
Local Government (Proportional Representation), Motion to introduce Bill negatived (04.06.85) 158
Water pollution, Norman Shaw Building (06.06.85) 456
Questions
Asbestos, Import controls 326-7w
Asbestos, Imports 325-6w
Asbestos cement, Imports 317-8w
Bus services, Privatisation 370w
Sportsgrounds, Safety 429w
Tourism, Merseyside 302

Helicopters 178w
Defence contracts 149w

"Helping the Community to Care" 586w

Henderson, Mr Barry
Debates etc
Family Law (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep & 3R (03.06.85) 115
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 64-5, 77, 94, 98, 104-5
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & Rem stages (05.06.85) 341, 355
Questions
Electrical safety, Caravan sites 445-6w
Local government expenditure, Fife Regional Council 135w
Public holidays 523-4w
Scottish Office, Cash limits 447w

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael, Secretary of State for Defence
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 896-910, 913, 914, 916, 918, 975
Questions
House of Commons questions, Ministry of Defence 62w
Ministry of Defence, Official cars 64w

Hess, Rudolph 76w

Heysham Power Station 4w

Hickmet, Mr Richard
Questions
Business statement 1017-8
Dispensing doctors, Inquiries 142-3w
Export subsidies, National Economic Development Council 69w
Family doctors, Business expenses 141-2w
Greece, Foreign relations 136w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1030
Questions
Dockyards, Privatisation 147w

Higgins, Mr Terence
Questions
Company pensions, Early retirement 590w
Drug abuse, Sussex 592w

Express coach services 627

High rise flats
Safety 514w

Higher education
Cost per student 27-8w
Educational finance 333-4w
Engineering education 127-8w
Expenditure 30-1w
Industry 218w
Northern Ireland 534w
Opposition days (04.06.85) 206-42
Student numbers 31w
Technical education 127-8w

Higher education admission
Dental students 510w
Mature students 163w
Student numbers 572w

"Higher Education Consultation Paper" (04.06.85) 206-42, 332-4w
Investment appraisal 332-4w

Higher education teachers
Graduates 334w

Highlands of Scotland
Overseas trade 174w

Hill livestock allowances 90w

Hillingdon
Planning appeals 316w

Hind, Mr Kenneth
Questions
Small businesses, Government contracts 296-7

Hip replacements 96w
Hospital waiting lists 96w

Hirst, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 79-82
Questions
Antifouling paints, Sailing boats, 457w
Employment level 394w
Housing standards, Scotland 882-3
Official secrets, Trials 751
Police Federation 206w
Shipbuilding, Privatisation 173w

Historic buildings
Northern Ireland (11.06.85) 847-67

Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission 269w

Hostoric Churches (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (11.06.85) 847-67

HM Inspectorate of prisons 19w

HMS Ark Royal 139-40

HMS Conqueror
Diaries 295-6w

HMS Euryalus 424w
Repairs & maintenance 424w

HMS Otter 62w, 424w
Repairs & maintenance 424w

Hogg, Mr Douglas
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 559-64, 581

Hogg, Mr Norman
Debates etc
Historic Churches (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (11.06.85) 849-50
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 70, 80, 81
Questions
Supplementary benefits, Pensioners 235w

Holiday leave
Junior hospital doctors 588w

Holidays
Scottish Development Agency 571w

Holland, Mr Stuart
Debates etc
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 761-7, 769, 771, 784
Questions
International Fund for Agricultural Development 298w

Holloway Prison 207-8w, 493-4w
Mentally disturbed offenders 493w
Prison accommodation 561w
Prison administration 493-4w
Psychiatry 561w
Womens prisons 207-8w

Holloway Project Committee 207-8w, 493-4w

Holt, Mr Richard
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 555
Oral question time intervention (12.06.85) 891
Questions
Driving tests 374w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 176w
Norman Shaw building, Lifts 457w
Prime Minister official engagements 389w
Quota of handicapped workers 738
Remand in custody, Administrative delays 207w
Skilled workers, Unemployment 293-4
Youth unemployment, Langbaurgh 744-5

Home Affairs Select Committee
Narcotics 386-7w

Home energy audits 13-4

Home helps
Community programme 397w
Elderly 102-3w

"Home Improvement Consultation Paper" 42w, 887-8

Home Office
Central-local government relations 382w
House of Commons questions 17-8w
Ministers domestic visits 210w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 549
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 273-5
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1032
Family Law (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep & 3R (03.06.85) 116
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 341-2
Water pollution, Norman Shaw Building (06.06.85) 453
Questions
Berwick Rangers Football Club 411w
Employment level 393w
Nuclear war 142
Palestine, Overseas aid 298-9w
Tax allowances, Tree planting 65w

Home visits 360w
Hospital consultants 360w

Homelessness
Bed & breakfast accommodation 267w

Homicide 214w
Black, John 303-4w, 307w
Prisoners 443-4w
Robbery 443-4w

Honduras
Refugees 77w

Hong Kong
British residents abroad 408w
Civil service pensions 408w

Football hooliganism 152, 300-1w, 436, 438-40, (11.06.85) 868-74, 876
Government grants 129w
Ministerial statements (03.06.85) 21-33

Horse racing
Government grants 161-2w

Horses & Ponies Bill 1984/85
2R order read (07.06.85) 612

Hospital beds
Abortion 588w
Elderly 103w
Hospital closures 184-8w

Hospital closures
Greenwich 285w
Hospital beds 184-8w
Mental hospitals 184w
West Midlands 184w

Hospital Complaints Procedure Bill 1984/85 424w, 433w, 481w

Hospital consultants 102w
Home visits 360w
Obstetrics 224-5w
Tinnitus 168w

Hospital doctors
Prescriptions 363w

Hospital patients
Abortions 431w
Fertility 431w

Hospital staff 102w

Hospital waiting lists
Barnsley Hospital 432w
Hip replacements 96w
Orthopaedics 167w
Wales 167w
X rays 432w

Hospitals
Complaints 481w
Fires 96w
Food hygiene 737-8
Infectious diseases 227-8w
Management 107w, 300w, 563w

Hot line
USSR 137w

House of Commons
Members 195w

House of Commons catering
Terrace Pavilion 407w

House of Commons Commission
House of Commons questions 60w

House of Commons division bells 306w

House of Commons division of time
Private Members time (07.06.85) 608-11
Speakers rulings & statements (07.06.85) 545

House of Commons divisions
Speakers rulings & statements (11.06.85) 845, (12.06.85) 892

House of Commons procedure 14-5
Private Members bills 15
Speakers rulings & statements (13.06.85) 1019

House of Commons questions
Attorney-General 1-2w
Church Commissioners 1-2w
Civil service 7-9w
Dept of Education & Science 29-30w
Dept of Employment 55w
Dept of Energy 23-4w
Dept of Health & Social Security 99w
Dept of the Environment 39-40w
Dept of Trade & Industry 13-4w
Dept of Transport 3w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 74w
Greater London Council 124w
Home Office 17-8w
House of Commons Commission 60w
Lord Privy Seal 59-60w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 87-8w
Ministry of Defence 62w
Northern Ireland Office 83-4w
Office of Arts & Libraries 6-7w
Paymaster-General 82w
Public Accounts Commission 10-1w
Scottish Office 80w
Solicitor-General for Scotland 10w
Speakers rulings & statements (10.06.85) 639

Treasury 66w
Welsh Office 91w

House of Commons Refreshment Department
Bottled water 534w

House of Commons terrace
Hazards (07.06.85) 607
Speakers rulings & statements (07.06.85) 607

House of Fraser 189w, 569w
Takeovers 189w, 569w

House purchase
Ministry of Defence 145w

House renovation grants 42w, 461w, 882-3, 877-9, 888-9
Housing & elderly 889
Northern Ireland 1005
Rotherham 879
Scotland 882-3
Slums 887-8
Stockport 563w
Waltham Forest 878
West Midlands 878-9

Household surveys 412w
Food 219w

Households
Water supply 310w

Housing
Capital investment 268w

Housing Act 1961 33-4w

Housing Benefit Review 286w

Housing benefits
Expenditure 237-8w
Income 286w
Lambeth 585-6w
Northern Ireland 260w
Private rented housing 93w
Rates & rating 286w
Social security recipients 286w, 360w
Social security reviews 151, 551-2w
Students 364w

Housing completions
Elderly 43w

Housing construction
EC countries 268w
Falkland Islands 559w
North West region 891

Housing corporation
Corporate plans 516w
Housing & elderly 205w

Housing Defects Act 1984 40-2w, 349w, 516-7w
Departmental publications 349w

Housing improvement 49w, 888
Council housing 204w, 266-7w
Divis flats 245w
Empty housing 266-7w
Expenditure 462w
Local government 204w
Multiple occupation 34w

Housing insulation
Government grants to local authorities 44-6w

Housing policy 885

Housing standards 49w, 883-4
Scotland 882-3

Housing starts
Public sector housing 42w

Housing & elderly (06.06.85) 460-96
House renovation grants 889
Housing Corporation 205w

Housing & handicapped 477w
Local government expenditure 464w

Howarth, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 325
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 262-4
Questions
Community programme, West Midlands 398w
Dental health, Lost working days 97w
Dental services, Costs 98w
Dental services, Preventive medicine 97w
Dentistry, Patients 98w
Landing rights, Far East 196w
Landing rights, Judgments 196w
Landing rights, Philippine Airlines 196w
Philippines, Balance of trade 15-6w

Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey, *Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
Gibraltar, Ministers visits abroad 306-7w
Spain, EC accession 528-9w

Howell, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Social security (03.06.85) 43

Howell, Rt Hon Denis
Questions
Football hooliganism 876

Howell, Mr Ralph
Questions
Agricultural support systems, Expenditure 422w
Overseas trade 14-6w

Howells, Mr Geraint
Debates etc
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 180-3
Questions
Cardigan bypass 92w
Pigmeat, Food consumption 88w
Sheep scab, Wales 557w
Sheep worrying, Wales 91w
Stray dogs 389w
Welsh Office, Civil servants background 91-2w

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 549
Questions
Paramedical staff, Manpower 104-6w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Cleaning services 3

Hubbard-Miles, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 170
Questions
Community Nursing Services in Wales Review, Public appointments 264-5w

Hughes, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 62, 65, 66, 76, 83-4, 85, 87, 92-7
Questions
British Rail, Rolling stock 624
British Rail Engineering, Factory closures 371w
Unemployment 743-4

Hughes, Mr Roy
Debates etc
Oral question time intervention (05.06.85) 298
Questions
British Leyland, Investment 295
Bus services, Privatisation 370w
House renovation grants, Slums 887-8
Nuclear weapons, Transport 146w
Unemployment 395w

Hughes, Mr Sean
Debates etc
Higher education (04.06.85) 220-1
Questions
Higher education, Northern Ireland 534w
Immigration controls, Civil servants 208w
Unemployment 393-4w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 317
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 559, 560
Questions
Air pollution control, Health & Safety Executive 171w
Control of Pollution (Territorial Sea) (Revocation) Regulations 1985 202-3w
Forestry, Scotland 136w
Forestry grants 263w
Hedges & ditches, Nature conservation 219w
Housing policy 885
Immigration rules, Sex discrimination 426-7
Local government expenditure, Urban programme 459w
Metropolitan Police, Accountability 433
Nuclear war 142

Hull Prison 153-4w, 385-6w
Prison overcrowding 153-4w

Human embryo experiments 752

Human rights
Angola 76w
Chile 75w, 409w
Overseas trade 174w

Hume, Mr John
Questions
Border security in Ireland 998
Police informers, Northern Ireland 1002
Student grants, Northern Ireland 137-8w

Hunger strikes
Maze Prison 472w

Hunt class minesweepers 168w

Hunt, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for Energy*
Debates etc
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 248-9, 275-9
Questions
Alternative energy, Energy forecasting 526w
Alternative energy, Energy Research 525-6w
Alternative energy, Expenditure 526w
Alternative energy, Government grants 525w
Boiler conversion scheme 6
Coal closure area, Scotland 18-9
Coal mining, Dimissal 20
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 19-20
Coal mining, Industrial relations 6
Coal mining, Northern region 5-7
Coal mining, Redundancy 194w
Coal mining, Subsidence 409w
Energy alalysis 13-4
Energy conservation, Voluntary organisations 22w
Industrial energy conservation 170w
National energy managers exhibition 527w
Wave power, Energy costs 526-7w
Wave power, Energy research 527w
Wave power, Expenditure 525-6w
Wave power, Norway 526w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Questions
Ministry of Defence, House purchase 145w
Overseas trade, Romania 176w
Police, Manpower 424

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas, *Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 1003-4
Bombings, Killeen 260w
Border security in Ireland 535w, 998
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 248w, 536w, 996-8 1002-4
Demonstrations, Northern Ireland 996-7
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 1004-5
Explosives, Northern Ireland 247-8w
Explosives, Republic of Ireland 260w
Judiciary, Northern Ireland 1001
Licensing, Northern Ireland Office 241-5w
Northern Ireland Government 537w
Police informers, Northern Ireland 1000-2
Royal Ulster Constabulary 260-1w, 996, 1003
Security, Northern Ireland 535w, 995-6
Sinn Fein 538w, 996-8

Terrorism, Killeen 247w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 248w
Terrorism, Republic of Ireland 260w
Trials, Northern Ireland 1001

Hydroelectric power
Overseas loans 391w
Sri Lanka 391w

Hydrography
Western Isles 467w

Hypertension
Screening 233w

Hyster 83w

IBM
Restrictive trade practices 452w, 503w

Illegal broadcasting
Prosecutions 189w

Illegal immigrants
Indian subcontinent 213w

Immigrants
Sri Lanka 155w

Immigrants sponsors 154-5w
Tamils 154-5w

Immigration
Sri Lanka 493w
Waiting lists 443w

Immigration Act 1971 430-1

Immigration applications
Sri Lanka 215w

Immigration controls 21-2w, 431
Airline staff 205w
Civil servants 208w
Commonwealth immigrants (03.06.85) 52-9
EC countries 442-3w
Immigration rules (14.06.85) 1192-1200
Political refugees 303w
Temporary immigrants 154-5w

Immigration rules 431-2
European Court of Human Rights 427-8
Immigration controls (14.06.85) 1192-1200
Sex discrimination 426-8
Standing Order No 10 applications (03.06.85) 60-1

Import controls
Asbestos 326-7w
Sugar beet 420w

Import penetration
Batteries 177w
Costs 189w
Far East 454w

Imports
Asbestos 325-6w
Asbestos cement 317-8w
Brewing industry 133w
EC countries 454w
Food labelling 291w
Metallic marker pens 450-1w
Poultry meat 420-1w
Sale-or-return 501w
Tax yields 263w
2 4 5-T 261w
VAT 263w, 500-1w

"Improving Research Links between Higher Education & Industry" 218w

Incest
Tate, John 296w

Income
Council house sales 455w
Foreign patients 95w
Housing benefits 286w
Ordnance Survey 315w

Income tax
Social security benefits 264w

Independent Broadcasting Authority
Broadcasting 210w

India
Tamils 443w

Indian subcontinent
Entry clearances 213w
Illegal immigrants 213w

Industrial accidents 58-9w
Death 278-82w

Industrial Bio Test Laboratories 580w

Industrial democracy 397w
EC action 397w
Employment Act 1982 356w

Industrial development
North West region 514w
Wales 92w

Industrial Development Bill (HL) 1984/85
Royal Assent (13.06.85) 1067

Industrial disputes
Coal mining 7-10, 12-3, 19-20, 284w, 425
Dept of Health & Social Security 140w
Inland Revenue 18
Prison staff 497w
Public order policing 498w
Teachers 349w

Industrial energy conservation 170w

Industrial finance
Small businesses 176w

Industrial Health & Safety 201w
Orders & regulations 201w

Industrial noise
EC law 522-3w

Industrial production
Manufacturing industries 250w

Industrial relations
Coal mining 6, 13
Government Communications Headquarters 406w

Industrial research
Regional planning & development 173w

Industrial Safety
Electricity 572-3w
Prosecutions 573w

Industrial training 293-4

Industrial workers
Child benefit 233w

Industry
Educational finance 167w
Higher education 218w
Privatisation 172w

Industry & Parliament Trust 261w
Exhibitions 261w

Infant mortality
Whooping cough 182-3w

Infectious diseases
Cleaning services 227w
Health service staff 226-7w
Hospitals 227-8w
Inquiries 226w
Surgery 549w

Information technology
Local government reform 38w

Infrastructure 455w
Expenditure 455w

Injuries
Baton rounds 152w, 247w
Fairgrounds 353w
Northern Ireland 247w
Police 19w
Prisoners 382w

Inland revenue 112w, 249w
Industrial disputes 18

Inner city areas
Lighting 492w
Primary health care 234w
Social problems 204w

Inner city partnerships 48w
Expenditure 517-8w
Unemployment 59w

Inner London boroughs
Primary health care 234w

Inner London Education Authority
Adult education 42w
Sex discrimination 466w

Inquiries 324w
Charity Commission 296w
Dispensing doctors 142-3w
Infectious diseases 226w
International Find a Child Organisation 296w
Legionnaires disease 591w
Northern Ireland 470w
Police 303-4w
Police National Reporting Centre 211w
Scotland 310w
Spain 307w
Veterinary services 350-1w

Insolvency
Liability 178w

Insolvency Bill (HL) 1984/85 178w

Institution of Production Engineers 180w
Exhibitions 180w

Insurance
London Regional Transport 583w

Intelligence services
Ombudsman 211-2w

Interest groups
South Africa 408w

International conferences
Nuclear non proliferation treaty 308-9w
Public appointments 270-1w

International Court of Justice
Namibia 220w

International Find a Child Organisation 296w, 302w
Government assistance 302w
Inquiries 296w

International Fund for Agricultural Development 298w

International Labour Organisation 406w

International trade
Manufactured goods 190w

International Tropical Timber Organisation 324-6w

International Year of Disabled People 29w, 97w

International Year of the Child 29w, 97w
Government grants 29w

International Youth Year 29w, 97w
Government grants 29w

Intervention Board
Expenditure 292w
Export subsidies 292-4w

Intervention stocks 292w
Cereals 87w, 292w
Northern Ireland 426-7w
Wales 130-1w
Warwickshire 90w

Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Bill 1984/85
Royal Assent (13.06.85) 1067

Investment
British Leyland 295-6
Falkland Islands 560w
Falkland Islands Development Corporation 560w

Investment appraisal
"Higher Education Consultation Paper" 332-4w

Investment returns
Educational finance 332-4w

"Invitation to Promoters" 374w

Iron & steel industry 173-4w, (05.06.85) 414-22
Government assistance to industry 177w

Irving, Mr Charles
Questions
Mentally disturbed offenders 98-9w

Islington
Family income supplements 101w
Rate support grant penalties 459w
Retirement pensions 101w
Social security recipients 101w
Supplementary benefits 101w

Israel
Arab boycott 487-8w
Occupied territories 298-9w
Overseas trade 487-8w
UN resolutions 149-50

Italy
Coastal shipping 375-6w
Domestic appliances 17w

Jackson, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1132, 1166-70
Questions
EC Budget Council 65-6w

Janner, Mr Greville
Questions
Business statement 448
Equal opportunities officers, Government departments 18
Nuclear weapons deployment 148-9w
Population 284-5w
Racial discrimination, Tribunals 435w
School leaving, Leicester 747
Shoplifting, Acquittals 426

Japan
Export credit 299-300
Foreign trade 301
Non-tariff barriers 300

***Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick**, Secretary of State for the Environment*
Questions
Central-local government relations, Dept of the Environment 310w
Consultative Council on Local Government Finance 309-10w, 410-1w
Greater London Council, House of Commons questions 124w
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 162-3w
House of Commons questions, Dept of the Environment 39-40w
House renovation grants 888-9
House renovation grants, Housing & elderly 889
House renovation grants, Slums 887-8
Housing policy 885
Local government expenditure 461w
Local government expenditure, Urban programme 459w
Local government finance 461w
London Residuary Body 462w
Radioactive waste disposal, Yelland Power Station 563w
Rate support grant penalties, Islington 459w
Rate support grants, Finance 124w
Rent control, Private rented housing 884-6
Structure plans, Berkshire 457w
Water supply, Households 310w
Widdicombe Committee 455w

Jersey
Ministers domestic visits 210w

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 310
Questions
Jones, Sylvia, Mental hospitals 365w

Jet Provost aircraft 304w

Jews
USSR 388w

Job release scheme
Non-contributory benefits 448-9w
Pay 405w

John, Mr Brynmor
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.05) 1025-6
Food & Environment Protection Bill (HL), Rep (10.06.85) 670-4, 697, 699, 700-2, 703, 705, 706-7
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 162-7, 168-9, 170, 178, 189
Questions
Attendance allowance 551-2w
Death grants 478w
Maternity benefits 479w
National insurance contributions 480w
One parent families, Travelling expenses 551w
Social security reviews, Attendance allowance 551-2w
Social security reviews, Funerals 551-2w
Social security reviews, Housing benefits 551-2w
Social security reviews, Supplementary benefits 551-2w
Supplementary benefits, Exceptional needs payments 478w

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc
Defence estimates (12.06.85) 916, 954-6
Questions
Institution of Production Engineers, Exhibitions 180w
Planning blight, Land drilling 514w

Johnston, Mr Russell
Debates etc
Defence estimates (13.06.85) 1061-3
Questions
NATO ministerial meetings 148w

Jones Mr Barry
Debates etc
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 196-8
Questions
Development Board for Rural Wales, Finance 92w
Government assistance to industry, Wales 92w
Teachers, Members correspondence 30w

Jones, Mr Gwilym
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 553-5, 568, 575

Jones, Mr Robert B
Questions
Air transport, Competition 622

Jones, Sylvia 365w
Mental hospitals 365w

***Jopling, Rt Hon Michael**, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council, Ministerial statements (13.06.85) 1025-32
Questions
Central-local Government relations, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 291w
Cereal cooperatives, Government grants 519w
Coastal protection, Hayling Island 579-80w
Coastal protection, Supply estimates 151w
EC Agricultural Council 519w
EC grants & loans 90w
Food labelling, Sugar 579w
House of Commons questions, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 87-8w
Intervention stocks, Wales 130w
Intervention stocks, Warwickshire 90w
Milk, Production quotas 90w
Veterinary investigation Service 518w

Jordan
Official visits 389w

***Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith**, Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Debates etc
Higher education (04.06.85) 210-4, 218, 239-42
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1125-33, 1134, 1187-90
Questions
Adult education 257w
Burnham Committee, Public appointments 257w
Chorionic villus sampling, Clinical trials 239-40w
Conferences, USA 416w
Dental students, Higher education admission 510w
Dentistry, Medical education 510w
Dept of Education & Science, Cash limits 336w, 511-2w
Education, Central-local government relations 465w
Further education, Age participation rates 328-30w
Further education, Staff-student ratios 165w
Graduates, Costs 333-4w
Graduates, Higher education teachers 334w
Higher education, Engineering education 127-8w
Higher education, Industry 218w
"Higher Education Consultation Paper", Investment appraisal 332-4w
House of Commons questions, Dept of Education & Science 29-30w
Legionnaires disease, Medical research 126-7w, 240w
Lower attaining pupils 127w
Medical Research Council, Government grants 238-9w
Medical Research Council, Research finance 466w
Polytechnics, Educational finance 218w
Research councils, Public expenditure 510w
Research Finance, Polytechnics 217-8w, 331-2w
Science education, Graduates 504w
Science education, Student numbers 334-6w
Secondary education, Records of achievement 125-6w
Student grants 126w, 335-6w
Student grants, Costs 165-6w
Student loans 415-6w
Teachers, Educational exchanges 164-5w
Teachers, Members correspondence 30w
Teachers, Trade union membership 165w
Universities, Student numbers 570w
University Grants Committee, Manpower 509w
Youth training scheme, Further education colleges 337-48w

Judges 633-4
Racial discrimination 435w

Judgments 375w
Department of Health & Social Security 382w, 392w, 310w, 543w
Diminished responsibility 443w
European Court of Human rights (03.06.85) 60-1
European Court of Justice 491w
Landing rights 196w
Origin marking 491w

Judiciary
Northern Ireland 1001

Junior hospital doctors
Conditions of employment 587w
Contracts of employment 587w
Employment opportunities 224w
Holiday leave 588w
Pay 587w
Working hours 588w

Juventus 129w

Kampuchea
UN General Assembly 488w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Debates etc
Immigration rules, Standing Order No 10 applications (03.06.85) 60-1
Questions
Criminal damage, Greater Manchester 18-9w
Criminal statistics, Greater Manchester 18w
Political refugees, Tamils 432
Rose, WH, Members correspondence 434w

Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine

Debates etc
Administration of Justice Bill, Committee Membership (06.06.85) 457
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 547, 579
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1028
Elderly (06.06.85) 465, 469, 487
Handicapped (10.06.85) 649
Higher education (04.06.85) 209, 230, 233
Social security (03.06.85) 49-50
Questions
Milk, Production quotas 293w
National Coal Board 8

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Debates etc
Elderly (06.06.85) 471, 488-90
Social Security (03.06.85) 49
Questions
Business statement 1018
Fenitrothion 274-6w
Fenitrothion, Crop spraying 580-1w
NHS finance, Scotland 351w
Nurses, Pay 366-7w
Overseas trade, Highlands of Scotland 174w
Pesticide residues, World Health Organisation 580w
Shipping Lanes, Minch 373w

Kent
Driving tests 582w

Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Questions
Social security reviews 153

Key, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Higher education (04.06.85) 233-5
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1176-81
Questions
Overseas students, Scholarships 9-10w
Public order policing, Stonehenge 303w

Khan, Parvaiz 382w
Trials 382w

Khmer Rouge 488w

Kidney machines 104w

Kidney patients 104w

Killeen
Bombings 260w, 1004
Terrorism 247w

"Killing for Company" 189w
Prosecutions 189w

Kilroot Power Station 998-9

Kilroy-Silk, Mr Robert
Questions
Business statement 444
Drug abuse 434
Fish conservation, Scotland 273w
Homicide, Prisoners 443-4w
Police custody, Kirkby 494-5w
Prison medical services, Expenditure 495-7w
Prison staff, Industrial disputes 497w
Prisons, Construction costs 154w
Stafford Prison, Sanitation 494w
Unemployment 394w
Water pollution, Nitrates 890

Kings College London Bill (HL) 1984/85
Rep* (11.06.85) 737

King, Mr Roger
Questions
Ministry of Defence, Official cars 137
Motorways, Speed limits 373w
Nissan, Motor vehicle parts 449-50w

King, Rt Hon Tom, *Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc
Wages councils (06.06.85) 502-6, 531-3
Young people (11.06.85) 811, 818
Questions
Black economy 742-3
British Rail, Closed shop 740
Dept of Employment, Cash limits 123w
Employment level 393w, 397w, 742-3
Skillcentres 123-4w
Trade union elections 739
Trade unions, Gifts & endowments 740
Trade unions, Political levy 739-41
Unemployment, Statistics 741-2
Vacancies 742

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Debates etc
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 23-4, 32
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 170
Questions
Business statement 441-2, 1013-4
Social security reviews 150, 435-6, 1007-8
State earnings related pension scheme 750-1

Kinsale gas pipeline 468w, 553w

Kirkby
Police custody 494-5w

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc
Elderly (06.06.85) 472
Social security (03.06.85) 43
Questions
Civil defence, Disasters 206-7w
Forestry Grants, Shielsknowe 166w
Nuclear demolition mines, USA 148w
Overseas trade, Human rights 174w
Sites of special scientific interest 460w
Social security reviews, Housing benefits 151
Tax allowances, Tree planting 69w
Trade unions, Political levy 398-9w
Veterinary services, Scotland 350-1w

Kleinwort Benson 294w

Knight, Mrs Jill
Debates etc
Social security (03.06.85) 42
Wages councils (06.06.85) 504
Questions
Offences against children, Local government staff 210w

Knowles, Mr Michael
Questions
Road safety, Research 629-30

Knox, Mr David
Questions
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Doctors list of patients 427-8w
Council house sales 459w
Council house waiting lists, Board & lodging charges 513w
Exchange rates 287
International Tropical Timber Organisation 324-6w
Multiple occupation 33-4w
Multiple occupation, control orders 33w
Multiple occupation, Housing improvement 34w
Multiple occupation, Research 34w
Vagrancy 492w

Kuala Lumpur
Air routes 301-2w

Labelling
Consumer protection 450-1w

Laboratories
Animal cruelty 302w

Labour Party
Defence 753-4

Lambeth
Closed circuit television 441w
Housing benefits 585-6w
Prime Minister domestic visits 128-9w
Supplementary benefits 585-6w
Unemployment 395w

Lambie, Mr David
Debates etc
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 83, 101-4

Lamond, Mr James
Questions
Business statement 445
Chemical weapons, Arms control treaties 148
Clothing industry, Employment 390w
Entry clearances, Indian subcontinent 213w
European Security Conference 69w
Infrastructure, Expenditure 455w
Military exercises, Warsaw Pact 147w

Lamont, Mr Norman, *Minister of State for Trade and Industry*
Questions
British Leyland, Goods vehicles 292
British Steel Corporation, Factory closures 176w
Cockburn, Bill 390w
Foreign companies in UK 290
Government assistance to nationalised industries, British Leyland 173w
Import penetration, Costs 189w
MacGregor, Ian, Pay 133w
Manchester Steel 177w
Manufactured exports 392w
Nationalised industries, Managers 390-1w
Non-domestic rates 294-5
Post Office, Directors 391w
Postage stamps, Retail establishments 390w
Regional aid, Expenditure 11-2w
Regional aid, West Midlands 289-90
Shipbuilding, Privatisation 173w
Special steels, Monopoly 173-4w
Sri Lanka, Hydroelectric power 391w
Support for Innovation scheme, East Midlands 174-5w
Talbot UK 290
Tourism, Council of Ministers 12w
Tourism, Merseyside 302
Tourist industry 301-2
Tourist industry, Regional planning & development 301

Lancashire
Elderly 476w, 584-6w
Old peoples homes 544w
Residential care 476w, 586w

Land
Capital transfer tax 561-2w

Land acquisition 49w
British Rail 197-8w
Cumbria 258w
Stainmore 258w, 503w
Warcop 257-8w

Land drainage
Lough Ross 554w

Land drainage committees 420w

Land drilling
Petroleum 876-7
Planning blight 514w

Land reclamation
Derelict land 459w
Government grants 459w

Land registration
Computer applications 127w

Land values
London Docklands Development Corporation 53w

Landing rights
Far East 196w
Judgments 196w
Philippine Airlines 196w

Landor Cartons 405w
Dismissal 405w

Langbaurgh
Youth training scheme 744-5
Youth unemployment 744-5

Langtry Committee see Teachers Superannuation Working Party

Languages
Departmental publications 358w

Latham, Mr Michael
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1030

Syrian Arab Republic, Diplomatic Service (10.06.85) 639
Questions
Arafat, Yasser, Speeches 408w
Black, John, Homicide 303-4w, 307w
Bombings, Embassies 385w
Business statement 443
Falkland Islands 141-2
House renovation grants 888
Israel, Overseas Trade 487-8w
Israel, UN resolutions 149-50
Libyan Arab Republic, Nuclear non proliferation treaty 408-9w
Libyan Peoples Bureau, Deportation 442w
Palestine Liberation Organisation, UN resolutions 307w
Police Federation 206w
Prime Minister official engagements, Shamir, Yitzhak 193w
Skilled workers, Recruitment 292-3
Syrian Arab Republic, Embassies 488-9w
USA, Banks 488w
USA, Foreign trade 488w
USSR, Jews 388w
Youth training scheme 400w

Law centres 631-3

Law Reform (Parent & Child) (Scotland) Bill 1984/85
2R order read (07.06.85) 612

Law reports
Open government 156w

Law Society
Coopers & Lybrand Associates 555-6w

Lawler, Mr Geoff
Debates etc
Young people (11.06.85) 818, 837-9
Questions
Community industry scheme, Yorkshire & Humberside 520-1w
Community industry scheme, Youth employment 399w
Drug crimes, Extradition 441-2w
Origin marking, Judgments 491w
Youth training scheme 577w, 741

Lawrence, Mr Ivan
Questions
Video recordings, Censorship 381-2w

Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Debates etc
European Communities (Finance) Bill, 1R (14.06.85) 1124
Questions
Export subsidies, National Economic Development Council 69w

Leadbitter, Mr Ted
Questions
Local government finance 461w
Road safety barriers 630
Single homeless, Hartlepool 584w

Leader of the Opposition
Social security 150

Lear Fan 85-6w, 247w
Carbon fibre 247w
Company liquidations 85-6w
Public investment 247w

Leather & fur industries
Pregnant women 285-6w

Lee, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 980-4, 982-4
Questions
Armed forces, British citizenship 139, 145
Armed forces deployment 63w
Armed forces local overseas allowances 145
Armed forces medical services, Complaints 424w
Armed forces training, Dogs 60-1w
Armed forces training, Republic of Ireland 149w
Armed forces training, Stainmore 503w
Arms exports, Chile 259w
ARWEN 37 antiriot guns 423w
Central ordnance depots 145w
Civil service foreign service allowance 144-5
Defence contracts, Warships 503w
Defence land 61-2w
Defence procurement, Aish & Company 145w
Devonport dockyard, Apprentices 503w
Dockyards 503-4w
Dockyards, Privatisation 147w
Exservicemen, Convictions 304w
Grenades 168w
Guided weapons, Sea Wolf 145w
HMS Ark Royal 139-40
HMS Eurydus, Repairs & maintenance 424w
HMS Otter 62w
Hunt class minesweepers 168w
Hydrography, Western Isles 467w
Land acquisition, Cumbria 258w
Land acquisition, Stainmore 258w
Land acquisition, Warcop 257-8w
Ministry of Defence, House purchase 145w
Ministry of Defence, Official cars 137-8
RAF Caerwent 63-4w
RAF Greenham Common, Grenades 168-9w
RAF Greenham Common, Security 64w
RAF Molesworth, Grenades 63w
Ulster Defence Regiment 143-4
Ulster Defence Regiment, Crime 143
Woolwich Arsenal, Pest control 423w

Leeds Prison 153-4w
Prison accommodation 385-6w
Prison overcrowding 153-4w

Legal aid
Scotland 446w

Legal profession
Civil service 438-40w

Legal Profession Reform Bill 1984/85 (Proposed)
Motion to introduce bill negatived (11.06.85) 755-60

Legionnaires disease 106w, 126-7w, 144w, 227-8w, 240w, 591w
Government grants 144w
Inquiries 591w
Liverpool 106w
Medical research 126-7w, 144w, 240w
Public appointments 591w
Vaccination 240w

Leicester
Community programme 356-7w, 398w, 747
School leaving 747
Youth unemployment 747

Leicester City Council 356w, 456w

Leigh, Mr Edward
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 917
Questions
A1, Road safety barriers 371w
Community programme, East Midlands 398w
Guided weapons, Sea Wolf 145w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Gainsborough 128w
Prime Minister official engagements 129w, 193w
Support for innovation scheme, East Midlands 174-5w

Leighton, Mr Ron
Questions
Employment level 742
Khan, Parvaiz, Trials 382w

Leisure facilities
Beaches 579-80w

Lembach, Pedro 75-6w

Lester, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 32
Wages councils (06.06.85) 510, 515
Questions
Armed forces training, Dogs 60-1w
PAYE 293w
VAT, Tax thresholds 393w

Leukaemia
Age distribution 285w

Lewis, Sir Kenneth
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (13.06.85) 1111
Higher education (04.06.85) 209
Questions
Business statement 1020-1

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
Defence arms control unit 147w
Housing construction, North West region 891
Young people, Pay 404w

Liability
Insolvency 178w

Libyan Arab Republic
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 408-9w

Libyan Peoples Bureau 442w
Deportation 442w

Licensing
Amateur radio 326w
Car hire 375w
Contraceptives 549w
Goods vehicles 529w
Local Radio 211w
Northern Ireland Office 241-5w
Nursing homes 544w
Old peoples homes 544w
Television licences 211w
Tree felling 219w, 251-2w, 444w, 446w
Value added network services 190w

Licensing laws 212w

Lifts
Norman Shaw building 457w

Light dues 531w

Lightbown, Mr David
Questions
Consumer protection law 324w

Lighting
Crime prevention 492w
Inner city areas 492w
Motorways 379w, 537w

Lilley, Mr Peter
Questions
Employment level 743

Limited list prescribing 139-40w, 226w, 359w, 362-3w, 481w, 549-50w
Costs 362-3w

Lindop Committee see Data Protection Committee

Lipotriad 481w

List D schools 253-4w
Scotland 253-4w

Litherland, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Manchester Steel (05.06.85) 414-7
Questions
Housing improvement 49w
Housing standards 49w
Manchester Steel 177w
Manchester Steel, Takeovers 14w

Liverpool
Legionnaires disease 106w

Liverpool Football Club 129w, 300-1w

Lloyd, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1151-3
Questions
Coastal protection, Hayling Island 579-80w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 316
Questions
Cruise missile sites, Safety 147w

Ethiopia, Food aid 436w
Post office closures 285-6
Prevention of Terrorism Acts 206w
Prime Minister official engagements 193w
Water authorities, Privatisation 456w

Lloyds Bank International 488w

Lo Aguirre 455w

Local authorities
Contracts 438
Residential care 545w

Local Authorities (Political Expenditure) Bill 1984/85
1R (05.06.85) 331-3

Local education authorities 417-9w
Education Act 1981 330w
School meals 362w
Selective schools 569-70w
Youth training scheme 337-48w

Local enterprise agencies 180w, 288-9, 296
Coal closure areas 288-9
Government grants 288

Local enterprise boards 296

Local Enterprise Week 175w, 180w
Small businesses 175w

Local government
Costs 442w
Data Protection Act 1984 442w
Housing improvement 204w

Local Government Act 1972 317w

Local government aid to industry 296

Local Government Bill 1984/85 515w

Local government corruption
Cumbria 111w, 128w

Local government elections
Electoral reform 210w
Northern Ireland 537w, 1006
Proportional representation (04.06.85) 156-61

Local government expenditure 461w, 891-2
Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England & Wales 458w
Bus services 370w
By elections 457w
Canvassing 455w
Capital investment 458w
Fife Regional Council 135w
Housing & handicapped 464w
Propaganda (05.06.85) 331-3
Publicity 456w
Urban programme 459w

Local government finance 410-1w, 461w

Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 53-4w, 515w

Local Government Practices & Procedures Inquiry 455w

Local Government (Proportional Representation) Bill 1984/85 (Proposed)
Motion to introduce Bill negatived (04.06.85) 156-61

Local government reform 53-4w, 462w, 564w
Arts finance 357w
Block grant 564w
Civil service manpower 4-5w, 34w
Computer applications 36-7w
Computers 563-4w
Costs 437, 515w
Councillors 514w
Disclosure of information 515w
Greater London Council 317w, 352w, 411-2w, 437
Information technology 38w
Redundancy 36w, 352w
Residuary bodies 35-8w, 159-61w, 316w, 461w, 564-5w
Science & technology 563-4w
Transitional costs 515w
Voluntary organisations 34w

Local government services 891-2
Finance 412w

Local government social services
Aids for handicapped 477w
Ethnic minorities 586w
Wales 557w

Local government staff
Greater London Council 352w
Offences against children 210w

Local radio
Licensing 211w

Location of industry
Northern Ireland 83w

Lockton
Environment protection 876-7

Locomotives
British Rail 623-4

Lofthouse, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 253-4, 277
Questions
Local enterprise agencies, Coal closure areas 288-9
Wages councils 745

London boroughs
Council housing 32w
Rate limitation 515w
Urban programme 312w

London Buses 158-9w
Procurement 158-9w

London convention (10.06.85) 687-728

London docklands
Airports 52w
Owner occupied housing 53w
Railway transport 379w
Rented housing 323w

London Docklands Development Corporation
Employment opportunities 410w
Land values 53w
Owner occupied housing 323w
Public petitions (07.06.85) 592

London docklands railway 379w
Construction costs 379w
Fares 379w
Privatisation 379w

London Hospital 224-5w

London Regional Transport 373-4w, 379-80w, 583w, 629
Advertising 629
Insurance 583w
One person operation 373-4w

London Residuary Body 462w

Londonderry
Richmond Centre 540-1w

Long Sutton & Sutton Bridge bypass 265w
Orders & regulations 265w

Lord Chancellor 631-3

Lord Privy Seal
House of Commons questions 59-60w

Lords amendments (06.06.85) 423

Lorries
Ethiopia 558w
Overloading offences 437-8w
Safety 631

Lorry drivers
Driving licences 583-4w

Lost working days
Dental health 97w

Lough Ross
Land drainage 554w

Low pay 400w
Part-time employment 404w
Prosecutions 402w

Lower attaining pupils 127w, 335w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 315-6
Football hooliganism (11.06.85) 872-3
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 30-1
Questions
Social security reviews 152
Unemployment 394w
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 537w

Luce, Mr Richard, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Debates etc
Arms control treaties (07.06.85) 615-9
Nuclear non proliferation (06.06.85) 540-4
Questions
Chemical weapons, Arms control treaties 307w
Chemical weapons, USA 305w
Chityan, Sergei 271w
Middle East 73-4w
NATO UK contributions 269-70w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, International conferences 308-9w
Palestine Liberation Organisation, UN resolutions 307w
USSR, Hot line 137w

Luton Borough Council Bill (HL) 1984/85
3R order read (04.06.85) 137
3R (05.06.85) 285
Royal Assent (13.06.85) 1067

Lyell, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 561
Questions
Cereal cooperatives, Government grants 519w
Dentures 427w

McCrea, Rev William
Debates etc
Appropriation (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (05.06.85) 407-8
Questions
Security, Northern Ireland 535w
Sinn Fein 997

McCrindle, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 318
Social security (03.06.85) 44
Questions
Airlines, EC action 157w
Animal cruelty, Laboratories 302w
Business statement 445
Social security, Leader of the Opposition 150
Social security reviews, Retirement pensions 552w

McCurley, Mrs Anna
Debates etc
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 90-3, 94
Water pollution, Norman Shaw building (06.06.85) 451

McCusker, Mr Harold
Questions
Medical cards, Northern Ireland 1006
Sinn Fein 538w, 997

McDonald, Dr. Oonagh
Questions
British Aerospace, Privatisation 439w
Business expansion scheme 112w
Business expansion scheme, Company taxation 112-3w
Exceptional needs payments 550-1w
Families, Marginal tax rates 550w
Inland Revenue 249w
Inland Revenue, Industrial disputes 18
One parent families, Travelling expenses 551w
State earnings related pension scheme, Earnings related supplement 241w

State earnings related pension scheme, Pensioners 241w
Tax harmonisation, EC action 113w

Macfarlane, Mr Neil, *Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc
Property development, Dorset (12.06.85) 990-3
Questions
Berwick Rangers Football Club 411w
Derelict land, North West region 514w
Football, Government grants 161-2w
Football, Safety 462w
Football hooliganism 876
Gleneagles Agreement 460w
Land registration, Computer applications 127w
New towns, Greenbelt 161w
Perry Oaks Sludge Works 52w
Planning appeals, Hillingdon 316w
Planning blight, Land drilling 514w
Planning permission, Small businesses 49-50w
Property development, Business premises 315w
Royal parks 42-4w
Sewers, Occupiers liability 318w
Small businesses, Planning permission 463w
Sports council 875-6
Sportsgrounds, Safety 462-3w
Stonehenge 269w
Water charges 312-3w
Water supply, Aluminium 314-6w

Macfarlane Committee see Safety of Sports Grounds Working Party

MacGregor, Mr John, *Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
Debates etc
Food & Environment Protection Bill (HL), Rep (10.06.85) 687-8, 716-22, 723-4, 726-8
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Costs 291w
Agricultural support systems, Expenditure 422w
Agricultural surpluses, EC external trade 518-9w
Beef & veal, Agricultural subsidies 87w
Brewing industry, France 131w
Brewing industry, Imports 133w
Brewing industry, Subsidies 131w
Cereals, Intervention stocks 87w
Common agricultural policy 289w
Devon Ray 90-1w
Hill livestock allowances 90w
Intervention Board, Export subsidies 292-3w
Intervention stocks 292w
Intervention stocks, Cereals 292w
Milk, Production quotas 293w, 421-2w, 579w
Poultry meat, Plymouth 420-1w
Salmon, Canada 289w

McGuigan, Barry 750

McKay, Mr Allen
Debates etc
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 269-2
Coal mine closures, Standing Order No 10 applications (13.06.85) 1033-4
Questions
Bus services, Privatisation 370w
Unemployment 394w

MacKay, Mr Andrew
Questions
Football hooliganism 438-40
Licensing laws 212w

MacKay, Mr John, *Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Questions
Dental students, Scotland 533w
Dental technicians, Scotland 347w
Edinburgh Dental Hospital 349w, 533-4w
Elderly, Scotland 80-1w
Electrical safety, Caravan sites 445-6w
Fenitrothion 274-6w
Fish conservation, Scotland 273w
Forestry, Scotland 136w
Forestry Commission, Advisory services 414w
Forestry grant scheme 414w
Forestry grants, Shielsknowe 166w
Forests, Costs 413-4w
Forests, Research 350w
NHS, Scotland 572w
NHS finance, Scotland 351w
Peel Hospital, Pay beds 351w
Tinnitus maskers, Scotland 251w
Tree felling, Agricultural land 444w
Tree felling, Licensing 251-2w, 444w, 446w
Tree planting 166w
Tree planting, Forestry grants 166w
Trees, Acid rain 532-3w
Veterinary services, Scotland 350-1w

McKelvey, Mr William
Debates etc
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 346
Questions
Ministry of Defence, Crisis management 143w

MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 328
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 77-9
Questions
Ministry of Defence, Official cars 137-8

Maclean, Mr David
Questions
Armed forces training, Stainmore 503w
Defence land 61-2w
Driving offences, Glue sniffing 581w
Land acquisition, Cumbria 258w
Land acquisition, Stainmore 258w
Land acquisition, Warcop 257-8w
Local enterprise agencies 289
Milk, Production quotas 421-2w, 579w
M6, Motorway service areas 149-50w
Rights of way, Cumbria 410w
Small businesses, Planning permission 463w

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1028
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 782-4, (12.06.85) 999-1002
Questions
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 636
Gas flaring 23w

McNair-Wilson, Mr Michael
Questions
Lear Fan, Carbon fibre 247w

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (13.06.85) 1039, 1044-53, 1101
Questions
Armagh Prison, Body searches 368-9w
Chemical weapons 148-9
Grenades 168w
RAF Greenham Common, Grenades 168-9w
RAF Greenham Common, Security 64w
RAF Molesworth, Grenades 63w
SP-70 guns 63w
Training aircraft, Defence contracts 62-4w
Tucano aircraft, Defence contracts 305w
Tucano aircraft, Prices 304w
Ulster Defence Regiment 144

McQuarrie, Mr Albert
Debates etc
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 75, 83, 85, 102
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 334, 342, 359-61, 364, 380
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 3
Educational finance, Scotland 447-8w
Gibraltar, Ministers visits abroad 306-7w
Gibraltar, National insurance 306w
Gibraltar, Tourism 297w
House of Commons, Members 195w

Macrae, William 310w
Death 310w, 533w

McTaggart, Mr Bob
Questions
Macrae, William, Death 310w, 533w
Nuclear war 142
Specialist claims control units 546w
Specialist claims control units, Scotland 546w

McWilliam, Mr John
Questions
Cockburn, Bill 390w
Nationalised industries, Managers 390-1w
Post Office, Directors 391w

Madden, Mr Max
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 324
Higher education (04.06.85) 213
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 773, 775
Sri Lanka, Deportation (07.06.85) 565
Sri Lanka, Political refugees (03.06.85) 56
Young people (11.06.85) 813-4
Questions
Bradford City Football Club, Fires 153-4
Business statement 1021
Concessionary television licences, Bradford Metropolitan District Council 561w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Ethnic minorities 590w
Driving licences, Medical examinations 583-4w
Social security benefits rules, Fuel bills 589-90w
Supplementary benefits disregards of income 588-9w

Maghaberry Prison 473w, 542w
Construction materials 473w

Maginnis, Mr Ken
Debates etc
Appropriation (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (05.06.85) 387, 408-9
Questions
Bombings, Killeen 260w
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 248w, 996
Explosives, Northern Ireland 247-8w
Explosives, Republic of Ireland 260w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 260-1w
Security, Northern Ireland 535w
Terrorism, Killeen 247w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 248w
Terrorism, Republic of Ireland 260w

Magistrates courts
Prison sentences 492-3w

Magnox reactors
Plutonium 295w
Radioactive wastes 38w

Malone, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 902
Questions
Social security abuse 474-5w

Malvenda, Maria 409w

Management & Personnel Office
Management consultants 8w

Management consultants
Dept of Energy 23w
Dept of the Environment 54w
Management & Personnel Office 8w

Managers
District health authorities 140w
Nationalised industries 390-1w
Post Office 390w

Manchester Airport
Airlines 529w

Manchester Steel 14w, 177w, (05.06.85) 414-22
Factory closures (05.06.85) 414-22

Takeovers 14w

Manpower Services Commission
Aids for handicapped 171-2w
Civil service manpower 448w

Manufactured exports 176w, 392w

Manufactured goods
Aid financed trade 565w
Balance of trade 298
International trade 190w
UK trade with EC 299

Manufacturing industries
Industrial production 250w
North West region 174w
Private investment 67-8w

Maples, Mr John
Questions
Rent control, Private rented housing 884-5

Marek, Dr John
Debates etc
Higher education (04.06.85) 230-3
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1130, 1170-4
Questions
Motorways, Wales 557w
Wages councils, Young people 402w

Marginal tax rates
Families 550w

Marine Etc Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1976 189w

Marine surveys 582w
Public inquiries 582w

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1032
Questions
Business statement 1018-9
Entry clearances, Sri Lanka 216w
European Court of Human Rights 435w
Immigration, Waiting lists 443w
Immigration applications, Sri Lanka 215w
Immigration controls, EC countries 442-3w
Prime Minister official engagements 129w, 193w
Sex discrimination, Inner London Education Authority 466w
Social security recipients 479w
Tamils, Sri Lanka 443w
Tamils, Temporary immigrants 443w
UK trade with EC 179w

Marques
Shipping accidents 562w, 582w

Marriage
Wakeham, John 436

Marshall, Mr David
Questions
Employment level 394w

Marshall, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (13.06.85) 1039

Martin, Mr Michael J
Questions
Industrial democracy, EC action 397w
Nurses, Northern Ireland 537w

Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Questions
Barnsley Hospital, Hospital waiting lists 432w
Coal mining, Industrial relations 6
Hospital waiting lists, X rays 432w

Mastectomy Association 430w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 430w

Mater Hospital 246w
Development plans 246w

Maternity benefits 479w

Mates, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 927, (13.06.85) 1094-5
Questions
Management consultants, Dept of Energy 23w
Management consultants, Dept of the Environment 54w
Management consultants, Management & Personnel Office 8w

Mathematics education
Curriculum 416w

Matthew Brown (07.06.85) 600-1
Public petitions (07.06.85) 600-1
Takeovers (07.06.85) 600-1

Matthews Committee see Export Credits Guarantee Department Review

Mature students
Higher education admission 163w

Maude, Mr Francis
Questions
Motorways, Departmental publications 156-7w
Rent control, Private rented housing 885

Mawhinney, Dr. Brian
Debates etc
Higher education (04.06.85) 222-4
Social security (03.06.85) 46
Questions
British Rail, Flexible rostering 374w
Foreign investment in UK, Government grants 177-8w
Immigration Act 1971 430-1
"Killing for Company", Prosecutions 189w
Prime Minister official engagements 512w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 1003
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Recruitment 536w
Ulster Defence Regiment 143

Maxton, Mr John
Debates etc
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 29-30
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 80
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 339-40, 343-5, 369
Questions
School leaving 570w
School leaving, Scotland 571-2w
School leaving certificates, Scotland 572w
Skillcentres 397w
Universities, Student numbers 570w

Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr Robin
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1030
Oral question time point of order (13.06.85) 1008, 1010-2
Questions
House of Commons procedure 15

Maynard, Miss Joan
Debates etc
Food & Environment Protection Bill (HL), Rep (10.06.85) 694
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85, Public petitions (07.06.85) 594
Wages councils (06.06.85) 516-8

Maze Prison 472w
Hunger strikes 472w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Social security (03.06.85) 39-41, 50-1
Questions
Capital 69w
Capital transfer tax 440w
Cremation, Medical certificates 361w
Food labelling, Carbohydrates 110w
Health service staff, Repairs & maintenance 360w
Hospital closures, Hospital beds 184-8w
Hospitals, Management 107w
NHS, Expenditure 288w
Social security recipients, Housing benefits 360w
Social workers, Manpower 238w
Unemployed, Death 360w
Unemployment, Health 359w

Meadowcroft, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Elderly (06.06.85) 487-8
Handicapped (10.06.85) 657, 665-70
Local Government (Proportional Representation), Motion to introduce Bill negatived (04.06.85) 159
Sri Lanka, Political refugees (03.06.85) 55
Questions
Armed forces medical services, Complaints 424w
Buses, Safety 630
Drugs, Price differences 359w
Drugs, Price reductions 363w
Exchange rates 287
Hospital doctors, Prescriptions 363w
Hospitals, Complaints 481w
House renovation grants 882
House renovation grants, Housing & elderly 889
Leeds Prison, Prison accommodation 385-6w
Limited list prescribing, Costs 362-3w
Local enterprise boards 296
NHS, Prison medical services 361-2w
NHS complaints 433w
NHS complaints, Community health councils 433w
NHS complaints, Community health services 432-3w
NHS complaints, Private hospitals 433w
NHS complaints, Special health authorities 549w
NHS complaints, Sub judice 433w
Parental leave, EC law 201w
Prescriptions, Appeals 549-50w
Prison hospitals, Complaints 385w
Smoking related diseases, Costs 110w
Special hospitals, Complaints 481w
Trade unions, Political levy 739
Voluntary services unit, Government grants 208w

Meals on wheels
Newham 236w

Means tested benefits
Cash limits 362w

Medical Act 1983 (Amendment) Bill 1984/85
2R order read (07.06.85) 612

Medical cards
Northern Ireland 1006

Medical certificates
Cremation 361w

Medical education
Dentistry 510w
Speech therapists 359w

Medical examinations
Driving licences 583-4w

Medical experiments
Ear disorders 225w

Medical research
Cancer 359w
Congenital abnormalities 285-6w
Legionnaires disease 126-7w, 144w, 240w
Ruthenium 359w

Medical Research Council
Government grants 238-9w
Research finance 466w

Medical Standards Advisory Committee 583-4w

Medical treatments
Deaf 184w
Drug abuse 592w

Mellor, Mr David, Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department
Questions
Animal cruelty 128w, 207w
Animal cruelty, Laboratories 302w

Animal experiments 207w
Animal experiments, Animal cruelty 214w
Animal fighting, Prosecutions 209w, 304w
Central-local government relations, Home Office 382w
Child Care Steering Group, Public appointments 497-8w
Civil defence, Disasters 206-7w
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 425
Cookham Wood Prison 560w
Crime victims, Compensation 206w
Criminal damage, Greater Manchester 18-9w
Criminal statistics, Greater Manchester 18w
Drug abuse 433-4
Drug abuse, Police 208w
Drug crimes 215-7w, 433-4
Drug crimes, Extradition 441-2w
Drugs, Benzodiazepines 283w
Durham Prison 560-1w
Electoral reform, Local government elections 210w
Euthanasia, Convictions 22w
HM Inspectorate of Prisons 19w
Holloway Prison, Mentally disturbed offenders 493w
Holloway Prison, Prison accommodation 561w
Holloway prison, Prison administration 493-4w
Holloway Prison, Women prisons 207-8w
Homicide 214w
Homicide, Prisoners 443-4w
Judgments, Diminished responsibility 443w
Khan, Parvaiz, Trials 382w
Law reports, Open government 156w
Leeds Prison, Prison accommodation 385-6w
Licensing laws 212w
Magistrates courts, Prison sentences 492-3w
Mentally disturbed offenders 494w
Mercenaries 21w
Prison education services, Prison staff 154w
Prison hospitals, Complaints 385w
Prison medical services, Complaints 209w
Prison medical services, Expenditure 495-7w
Prison population 385w
Prison population, National Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders 205-6w
Prison population, Youth custody 385w
Prison staff 19w
Prison staff, Industrial disputes 497w
Prisoners, Crimes of violence 498-9w
Prisoners on remand 20-1w
Prisons, Construction costs 154w
Prisons, Sports facilities 382w
Private Bills, Small businesses 441w
Reading Prison 21w
Remand in custody, Administrative delays 207w
Shop hours 207w
Shoplifting 426
Shoplifting, Acquittals 426
Stafford Prison, Sanitation 494w
Vagrancy 492w
Voluntary services unit, Government grants 208w
Young offenders, Detention centres 213w
Young offenders, Prison sentences 495w
Young offenders, Sentencing 302w
Young offenders, Short sharp shock treatment 211w

Melton Mowbray Barracks 61w

Members (04.06.85) 147
Antismoking campaign 180-1w
House of Commons 195w
Speakers rulings & statements (05.06.85) 302

Members age (06.06.85) 459

Members allowances
Members secretaries 15-6

Members conduct
Speakers rulings & statements (04.06.85) 158, (05.06.85) 298, (06.06.85) 435, 436, (07.06.85) 563, 579, (13.06.85) 1006, 1011-2, 1022

Members correspondence
Board & lodging charges 181w
Nursing homes 139w, 181w
Plutonium 571w
Rose, W. H. 434w
Teachers 30w
Treasury 293w

Members interests
Speakers rulings & statements (13.06.85) 1022, 1023

Members of Parliament (Minimum Age) Bill 1984/85
1R (06.06.85) 459
2R order read (07.06.85) 612

Members secretaries
Members allowances 15-6
Poisoning (05.06.85) 374-5

Members speeches
Speakers rulings & statements (04.06.85) 162, (06.06.85) 492, (11.06.85) 823, (12.06.85) 896, (13.06.85) 1035

Members visits abroad
Speakers rulings & statements (13.06.85) 1022, 1023

Mental Health Act Commission
Codes of practice 475w

Mental Health Act 1983 475w, 494w

Mental health services
Autism 184w

Mental hospitals
Hospital closures 184w
Jones, Sylvia 365w
Nurses 365w

Mentally disturbed offenders 98-9w, 494w
Holloway Prison 493w

Mercenaries 21w

Merchant, Mr Piers
Questions
Exceptional needs payments, Cookers 358w
Fairgrounds, Accidents 353w
Police vehicles, Northumbria 441w
Public expenditure 392w
Trade unions, Gifts & endowments 740

Merchant ships
Shipbuilding 453w

Mercury
Health & Safety Executive 276w

Merseyside
Tourism 302
Unemployment 403w

Metallic marker pens 445w, 450-1w, 556-7w
Hazardous materials 450w
Imports 450-1w
Northern Ireland 553w
Schools 504w
Scotland 445w
Wales 556-7w

Metropolitan counties 514w

Metropolitan Police 210w
Accountability 432-3
Closed circuit television 441w
Football 212w
Overtime 425
Pay 1008
Riot control weapons 302w

Mexico
State visits 752-3

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Debates etc
Rural Areas, Wales (04.06.85) 164, 183-6

Michie, Mr Bill
Questions
NATO, Defence expenditure 466-8w
NATO, UK contributions 269-70w

Mid Wales Development Board 558w

Middle East 73-4w
Peace negotiations 307w, 750

Middlesbrough
Skillcentres 448w, 520w

Midland link motorways 376w
Road salting & gritting 376w

Midwives
Northern Ireland 369w
Pay 300w, 366-7w

Mikardo, Mr Ian
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 578-82
House of Commons divisions (11.06.85) 845, (12.06.85) 892
London Docklands Development Corporation, Public petitions (07.06.85) 592
Public sector housing, Public petitions (07.06.85) 591
Rate support grants, Public petitions (07.06.85) 591
Questions
Chemical weapons, Export licensing 175w
Kinsale gas pipeline 553w

Mikardo, Ian (12.06.85) 892

Military attaches 308w
Central America 308w

Military exercises
Cruise missile sites 424w
Cruise missiles 562w
Warsaw Pact 147w

Military police 60-1w

Milk
Production quotas 6w, 90w, 293w, 421-2w, 557w, 579w
Wales 93w

Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 315
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 66
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 361-4, 368
Questions
Britoil, Privatisation 571w
Rate rebates, Scotland 82w
Rateable value, Scotland 81w
Rating revaluations, Scotland 81w
Social security payments, Banks 591w

Miller, Dr M S
Debates etc
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1128, 1149, 1159, 1164

Mills, Sir Peter
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1027
Questions
EC Agricultural Council 519w

Milton Hutchings 316w

Minch
Shipping lanes 373w

Minimum wage 149, (06.06.85) 497-536
USA 745-6

Ministerial speeches
Building Societies Association 264w
Speakers rulings & statements (06.06.85) 479

Ministerial statements
Airports (05.06.85) 307-29
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1025-32
Football hooliganism (03.06.85) 21-33
Social security (03.06.85) 34-51
Speakers rulings & statements (05.06.85) 328, (10.06.85) 639, (13.06.85) 1024
Sri Lanka (03.06.85) 52-9
Water supply (06.06.85) 449-56

Ministers
Speakers rulings & statements (05.06.85) 299-300

Ministers correspondence 562w
Cooklin, Shirley 562w

Ministers domestic visits
Home Office 210w
Jersey 210w
Nuclear power stations 10-2

Ministers visits abroad
Falkland Islands 144w
Gibraltar 297w, 306-7w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
Central-local government relations 291w
House of Commons questions 87-8w

Ministry of Defence
Crisis management 143w
Defence procurement 424w
House of Commons questions 62w
House purchase 145w
Official cars 64w, 137-8
Official secrets 305w
Pay settlements 258-9w

Missing persons
Chile 75w
Police national computer 383-4w

Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 283w

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Debates etc
Administration of Justice Bill, Committee membership (06.06.85) 457
Legal Profession Reform, Motion to introduce Bill negatived (11.06.85) 755-8
Wakefield Prison, Public petitions (14.06.85) 1123
Questions
EC budget 299w
Family income supplements, Children 359w
Manufactured goods, International trade 190w
Pirate radio stations, Advertising 96-7w
Police Complaints Authority 385w
Police Complaints Authority, Official cars 492w
State earnings related pension scheme, Costs 431w

Mitchell, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
British Rail, Equal opportunities 631
British Rail, Flexible rostering 374w
British Rail, Land acquisition 197-8w
British Rail Engineering, Factory closures 371w
British Rail Engineering, Redundancy 371w
British Rail Southern Region, Rolling stock 3-4w
Bus services, Privatisation 370w
Bus services, Safety standards 371w
Channel crossing, Tenders 374w
Coastguard, Drug crimes 377-8w
Coastguard, Manpower 377-8w
France, Coastal shipping 4w
Light dues 531w
National Bus Company, Pensions 150w
Passenger transport executives, Railway transport 530w
Railway timetables, Publicity 150w
Shipping lanes, Minch 373w
St Pancras to Sheffield railway line 371w

Moate, Mr Roger
Questions
Goods vehicles, Licensing 529w

Mobile homes
Rents 460w

Mobility allowance 551-2w
Administrative delays 475-7w
Costs 223w
Wales 477w

Mobility of disabled 373w

"Mobility of Quotas Consultation Paper" 579w

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 311
Questions
Border security in Ireland 535w
Business statement 444
Milk, Production quotas 6w
Trials, Northern Ireland 1001

Monopolies & Mergers Commission 176w, 189w
Association of British Travel Agents 262-3w
British Railways Board 183-4w
Travel agents 262-3w

Monopoly
Special steels 173-4w

Monro, Sir Hector
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 959-61
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1029

Montgomery, Mr Fergus
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 316

Moore, Mr John, *Financial Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
British Aerospace, Privatisation 439w
Britoil, Privatisation 562w
Business expansion scheme 112w
Business expansion scheme, Company taxation 112-3w
Capital 69w
Capital transfer tax 440w
Capital transfer tax, Ancient woodlands 561-2w
Demergers 439-40w
Earned income, West Midlands 67w, 251w
Forestry grants 263w
Income tax, Social security benefits 264w
Inland Revenue 249w
PAYE 73w, 293w
Private investment, Manufacturing industries 67-8w
Tax allowances, Tree planting 65w, 69w
Tax collection offices 112w
Treasury, Members correspondence 293w

Moorfields Eye Hospital 141w
Glaucoma 141w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 312
Handicapped (10.06.85) 640-7, 655, 684
Questions
Aids for handicapped, Local government social services 477w
Alzheimers Disease Society 5w
Board & lodging charges, Social security recipients 229w
Cochlear implants, Children 184w
Headway, government assistance to voluntary organisations 477-8w
Housing & handicapped, Local government expenditure 464w
Job release scheme, Non-contributory benefits 448-9w
Manpower Services Commission, Aids for handicapped 171-2w
Mobility allowance, Administrative delays 475-7w
Mobility allowance, Wales 477w
Poliomyelitis, Vaccination 183w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Rudolf Steiner schools 465w
Social security appeals tribunals 140-1w
Speech therapists, Pay 183w
Teacher training, Rudolf Steiner schools 465-6w
Teachers, Deaf 163w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 173-7
Questions
Director of Public Prosecutions, Criminal proceedings 296-7w
Judges 634
Law centres 633
Young offenders, Sentencing 302w

Morris, Mr Michael
Questions
House renovation grants, West Midlands 878-9

Morrison, Mr Peter, *Minister of State for Employment*
Debates etc
Young people (11.06.85) 806, 809, 812-8
Questions
Community industry scheme, Yorkshire & Humberside 520-1w
Community industry scheme, Youth employment 399w
Community programme 744
Community programme, East Midlands 398w
Community programme, Greater London 398w
Community programme, Home helps 397w
Community programme, Leicester 356-7w, 398w, 747
Community programme, South West region 398w
Community programme, West Midlands 398w
Employment level 394w
Employment schemes, Expenditure 122w
Open Tech, Upper Waiting Hall 520w
Professional & Executive Recruitment, Take-up of employment 403w
School leaving, Leicester 747
School leaving, Vocational guidance 57-8w
Skillcentres 397w, 404w, 748-9
Skillcentres, Coal closure areas 58w
Skillcentres, Hampshire 578w
Skillcentres, Middlesbrough 448w, 520w
Skillcentres, Southampton 200w
Skilled workers, Clothing industry 398w
Take-up of employment, Northern region 394-5w
Unemployment 395w, 743-4
Vacancies 113-21w
Wages inspectorate 404w
Youth employment, Service industries 746-7
Youth training scheme 56-7w, 123w, 276w, 400w, 577w, 741
Youth training scheme, Confederation of British Industry 400w
Youth training scheme, Newham 521-2w
Youth training scheme early leavers 58w
Youth unemployment 746-7

Mortgages 248-50w

Motor insurance
EC law 412-3w

Motor Insurers Bureau 412-3w

Motor vehicle parts
Nissan 449-50w

Motor vehicle theft
Police national computer 384w

Motor vehicles
Crown Suppliers 32w

Motor Vehicles (Construction & Use) Regulations 1978 437-8w

Motorcycles
Driving tests 581-2w
Noise control 437w

Motor-cycle Crash Helmets (Restriction of Liability) Bill 1984/85
Royal Assent (13.06.85) 1067

Motorway service areas
M1 581w
M6 149-50w
M62 3w
Telephone systems 375w

Motorways
Departmental publications 156-7w
Lighting 379w, 557w
Repairs & maintenance 265w
Road accidents 379w
Road works 265w
Roads 380w
Sewers 371w
Speed limits 373w
Wales 557w

"Motorways: A National Asset" 156-7w

Mount Pleasant Airport 141, 161w
Expenditure 161w

Moynihan, Mr Colin
Debates etc
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 788-91
Questions
Demonstrations, Northern Ireland 996-7

Mudd, Mr David
Questions
Board & lodging charges, Members correspondence 181w
Nursing homes, Members correspondence 139w, 181w

Multiple occupation 33-4w
Control orders 33w
Housing improvement 34w
Research 33-4w, 203w

Murphy, Mr Christopher
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 324
Questions
Motorcycles, Noise control 437w
Post Office Users Council, Postal deliveries 565w
Postage stamps, Retail establishments 390w
Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Welwyn 96w

M1
Motorway service areas 581w

M3 374-5w
Road construction 374-5w
Road safety 630-1

M6 149-50, 376-7w
Motorway service areas 149-50w
Road works 377w

M11 437w, (07.06.85) 598-9
Public petitions (07.06.85) 598-9
Road construction 437w

M25 266w, 379w
Research 266w

M42 266w
Research 266w

M62 3w
Motorway service areas 3w

Najem, Salah 442w

Namibia
Foreign policy 555w
International Court of Justice 220w
Political prisoners 220w

Narcotics 433
Home Affairs Select Committee 386-7w

National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education 217-8w

National Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders 205-6w
Prison population 205-6w

National Bus Company
Pensions 150w, 371-2w

National Carriers 521w

National Coal Board 7-8
Finance (04.06.85) 245-79

National Economic Development Council
Export subsidies 69w

National energy managers exhibition 527w

National Freight Company
Fires 521w

National income
Overseas aid 298w

National insurance
Gibraltar 306w

National insurance contributions 293w, 480w, 750-1
Prosecutions 365w

National territory
Chile 409w

Nationalised industries
Managers 390-1w
Procurement 623-5

NATO
Civil defence 211w
Defence contracts 148w
Defence expenditure 466-8w
UK contributions 269-70w

NATO ministerial meetings 148w

Natural gas
Northern Ireland 535w

Natural radioactivity 268w
Health hazards 543-4w
Scotland 273-4w

Nature conservation
Expenditure 368w
Hedges & ditches 219w
Northern Ireland 554w
Poultry 412w
Sites of special scientific interest (10.06.85) 639
Wetlands 539-40w

Navy
Resignations 147

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 449w

Neale, Mr Gerrard
Questions
Law centres 633
Road signs, Rural areas 625-6

Nellist, Mr Dave
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 548, 581, 584, 585
Immigration controls (14.06.85) 1192-1206
Immigration rules (13.06.85) 1024
Sri Lanka, Political refugees (03.06.85) 55-6, 58
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85 (07.06.85) 604
Wages councils (06.06.85) 498, 522-5
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 1-3
Business statement 447, 1019-20
Coal mining, Dismissal 8
Gas supply industry, Northern Ireland 536w
Intervention stocks, Warwickshire 90w
Trident 146w
Vacancies 113-21w
Weedkillers, Abortion 1010
Young people, Pay 397w
Young people, Social security benefits reductions 365-6w
Youth unemployment, Supplementary benefits 362w

Nelson, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 327
Questions
Football hooliganism 436

New businesses 568-9w
Northern region 568-9w

New towns
Greenbelt 161w

Newham
Meals on wheels 236w
Police 498w
Retirement pensions 236w
Social security recipients 235-6w
Unemployment 522w
Unemployment benefits 236w
Urban programme (03.06.85) 127-36
Young people (03.06.85) 127-36
Youth training scheme 521-2w
Youth unemployment 199w, 522w

Newham seven 498-9w
Trials 498-9w

Newton, Mr Tony, Minister of State for Social Security
Debates etc
Elderly (06.06.85) 465-75, 478, 479
Handicapped (10.06.85) 647-58, 684-6
Questions
Aids for handicapped, Local government social services 477w
Attendance allowance 551-2w
Attendance allowance, Costs 223w
Central-local government relations, Dept of Health & Social Security 543w
Child benefit, Social security benefits rates 234w
Death grants 478w
Dept of Health & Social Security, Civil servants political activities 106w
Dept of Health & Social Security, Industrial disputes 140w
Handicapped, Social security reviews 139w
Headway, Government assistance to voluntary organisations 477-8w
Health services, Handicapped 102w
Housing Benefit Review 286w
Housing benefits, Expenditure 237-8w
Housing benefits, Income 286w
Housing benefits, Rates & rating 286w
Maternity benefits 479w
Means tested benefits, Cash limits 362w
Mobility allowance, Administrative delays 475-7w
Mobility allowance, Costs 223w
Mobility allowance, Wales 477w
School meals, Local education authorities 362w
Social fund, Budget 237w
Social security abuse 474-5w
Social security appeals tribunals 140-1w
Social security benefits rates 481w
Social security payments, EC countries 479-81w
Social security recipients, Rates & rating 286-7w
Social security recipients, Supplementary benefits 287w
Social security reviews 237w, 431w
Social security reviews, Attendance allowance 551-2w
Social security reviews, Funerals 551-2w
Social security reviews, Housing benefits 551-2w
Social security reviews, Occupational pensions 431w
Social security reviews, Retirement pensions 552w
Social security reviews, School meals 552w
Social security reviews, Supplementary benefits 551-2w
State earnings related pension scheme, Costs 431w
Supplementary benefits, Budget 287-8w

Newton Aycliffe
Defective housing 632-3

NHS
Abortion 429w
Expenditure 288w
Management 138-9w
Pregnancy counselling 428w
Pregnancy tests 428w
Prison medical services 361-2w
Privatisation 198w, 543w, 551w, 563w, 572w
Scotland 572w
Technicians 360w
Wales 198w

NHS & private practice
Dental technicians 389w

NHS charges 475-6w

NHS complaints 433w
Community health councils 433w
Community health services 432-3w
Family practitioner committees 433w
Private hospitals 433w
Special health authorities 549w
Sub judice 433w

NHS finance
Scotland 351w

NHS Management Board 138-9w, 548-9w
Public appointments 513w, 547-8w

NHS Management Inquiry 138-9w

Nicaragua 193w
Bananas 222w
Disclosure of information 9w
EC external relations 222w
EC trade 193w
Official secrets 436w
Overseas aid 297w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Questions
Africa, Disaster relief 638
Animal welfare 519w
British Rail, Closed shop 740
Coal mining, Redundancy 9
Hess, Rudolph 76w
Mobile homes, Rents 460w
Nuclear war 142
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85 752
Wages councils, Youth employment 746

Nicholson, Mr James
Debates etc
Appropriation (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (05.06.85) 388-93, 395
Questions
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 1003
Dairy farming, Northern Ireland 537w
Milk, Production quotas 6w, 90w
Milk, Wales 93w
Refrigeration, Northern Ireland 426-7w

Nigeria
British residents abroad 270w
Disclosure of information 270w
Personal safety 270w

Nilsen, Dennis 189w

Nissan
Motor vehicle parts 449-50w
Procurement 491w

Nitrates
Water pollution 890

Nitrogen oxides 313-14w
Air pollution 313w
Oil refineries 313w

Noise control
EC action 437w
Motorcycles 437w

Non-contributory benefits
Job release scheme 448-9w

Non-domestic rates 294-5

Non-tariff barriers
EC internal trade 178w
Japan 300

Norman Shaw building
Lifts 457w
Sanitation 306w
Water pollution (05.06.85) 374-5, 411w, (06.06.85) 449-56
Water supply 411w, 513w

Normanton, Mr Tom
Questions
European Foundation, Recruitment 220w

North East Thames Regional Health Authority 589w

North of England County Council Association 458w

North Sea
Ships 275w

North Uist 467w

North West region
Derelict land 514w
Government assistance to industry 174w
Housing construction 891
Industrial development 541w
Manufacturing industries 174w

North West Thames Regional Health Authority 589w

Northern Gas 358w
Social security recipients 358w

Northern Ireland
Aerospace industry 85-6w
Agricultural research 468w
Air routes 530w, 538w
Airports 539w
Ammunition 553w
Arrests 83w
Asbestos 245-6w
Bankruptcy 82w
Baton rounds 84w, 246-7w
Bridges 541-2w
Bus services 368w
Church buildings (11.06.85) 847-67
Council house sales 534-5w
Cycleways 367-8w
Dairy farming 537w, 1009-10
Demonstrations 996-7
Driving tests 367w
Educational finance 138w
Elections 1005-6
Employment discrimination 1004-5
Employment level 368w
Exceptional circumstances additions 425w
Explosives 247-8w, 471w
Family income supplements 425w
Firearms 472w, 542w, 553w
Firearms certificates 471w, 556w
Fish conservation 554-6w
Gas pipelines 246w, 468w, 535w, 553w
Gas supply industry 426w, 536w
Government assistance to industry 553w
Higher education 534w
Historic buildings (11.06.85) 847-67
House renovation grants 1005
Housing benefits 260w
Injuries 247w
Inquiries 470w
Intervention stocks 426-7w
Judiciary 1001
Local government elections 537w, 1006
Location of industry 83w
Medical cards 1006
Metallic marker pens 553w
Midwives 369w
Natural gas 535w
Nature conservation 554w
Nurses 369w, 426w, 537-8w
Police informers 1000-2
Power stations 998-9
Prison sentences 82-3w
Prisons 472-3w
Public expenditure (05.06.85) 382-413
Public sector housing 539w
Public sector housing sales 1005
Refrigeration 426-7w
Remand in custody 83w
Retirement pensions 367w, 425-6w
Reyes syndrome 181w, 183w
River pollution 554-6w
Road construction 367w
Security 535w, 995-7
Shares 554w
Sites of special scientific interest 368w
Social security recipients 425w
Standard Telephones & Cables 999-1000
Student grants 137-8w
Supply Estimates (05.06.85) 382-413
Terrorism 151-2w, 248w, 469-72w
Transport subsidies 426w
Trials 1000-1
Unemployment 537w
Veterinary services 468w
Water treatment 540w
Wetlands 539-40w

Northern Ireland government 537w

Northern Ireland Health & Social Services Boards 369w

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Construction costs 245w
Fraud 436w
Testing 246w

Northern Ireland Office
House of Commons questions 83-4w
Licensing 241-5w

Northern region
Coal mining 5-7
Companies 568-9w
Economic situation 458w
Government assistance to industry 297-8
New businesses 568-9w
Professional & Executive Recruitment 394-5w
Take-up of employment 394-5w

Northumberland
Road signs 625

Northumbria
Police vehicles 441w

Norway
Offshore supply vessels 295w
Ships 275w
Territorial waters 275w
Wave power 526w

Notices to Residential Occupiers & Rate-Demands (Amendment) Rules 1985 323w

Notifiable diseases 227w

Nottinghamshire County Council Bill (HL) 1981/82
Rep* (12.06.85) 875

Novi Boch (10.06.85) 730-6

Nuclear artillery shells 142-3

Nuclear demolition mines
USA 148w

Nuclear disarmament 142

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Orkney 11

Nuclear fuels
Transport of radioactive materials 2w

Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 198w

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate 275w
Civil service dispersal 4, 277-8w
Employment opportunities 277w
Manpower 276-7w
Recruitment 276-7w

Nuclear non proliferation (06.06.85) 537-44
UN resolutions 487w

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 24w, 528w
International conferences 308-9w
Libyan Arab Republic 408-9w

Nuclear power stations 4
Cancer hazards 10-2
Civil service dispersal 278w
Dounreay 11-2
Ministers domestic visits 10-2
Pollution monitoring 269w
Power station closures 462w
Radiation hazards 269w
Radioactive wastes 39w
Safety 11
Safety standards 275w
Special constables 193w
Winfrith 11-2

Nuclear reactors
Chile 455w
Nuclear safeguards 295w

Nuclear safeguards 24w
Fast reactors 527w
Nuclear reactors 295w

Nuclear submarines 879-80

Nuclear war 142

Nuclear weapons
Transport 146w

Nuclear weapons deployment 148-9w

Nuclear weapons tests (07.06.85) 613-20
Trident missiles 467w

Nuffield Centre for Health Services Studies 359w

Nurses
Back pain 473w
Mental hospitals 365w
Northern Ireland 369w, 426w, 537-8w

Overtime 426w
Pay 5w, 153, (04.06.85) 280-4, 366-7w, 436, 538w

Nursing homes
Licensing 544w
Members correspondence 139w, 181w
Supplementary benefits 544-5w

"Nursing Staff Review Body Report, 1985" 351w, 434w

Nursing & Midwifery Staff & Professions Allied to Medicine Pay Review Body 366-7w

Nutrition & health 219w, 289w
Public petitions (07.06.85) 597-8

Nutritional needs
Prisoners 386w

O'Brien, Mr William
Questions
Water charges 312-3w
Water supply industry 461w

Obscene Publications Act 1959 189w

Obstetrics
Hospital consultants 224-5w

Occupational pensions
British Shipbuilders 323w
Employers attitudes 431w
Social security reviews 431w

Occupational therapists 474w
Vacancies 431w

Occupied territories 298-9w
Israel 298-9w

Occupiers liability
Sewers 318w

Offences against children
Local government staff 210w
Prosecutions 296w

Offenders
Travel restrictions 304w

Office of Arts & Libraries
House of Commons questions 6-7w

Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 360w

Office of Telecommunications
British Telecom 324w

Official cars
Ministry of Defence 64w, 137-8
Police Complaints Authority 492w

Official publications
Defective housing 516-7w

Official secrets
Disclosure of information 388w
Ministry of Defence 305w
Nicaragua 436w
Overseas Development Administration 388w
Trials 751

Official visits
Jordan 389w

Offshore drilling 194w

Offshore supply vessels
Norway 295w

Oil refineries
Nitrogen oxides 313w
Sulphur dioxide 314w

Oil tankers 373w
Shipping lanes 373w

Okehampton bypass 197w, 380w

Old peoples homes
Greater London 544w
Lancashire 544w
Licensing 544w

Older workers
Unemployment 395w

Oldham Borough Council 455w

Ombudsman
Intelligence services 211-2w

One parent families
Travelling expenses 551w

One person operation 373-4w
London Regional Transport 373-4w
£1 coins 440-1w

O'Neill, Mr Martin J
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (13.06.85) 1043, 1097-101
Questions
Navy, Resignations 147
Unemployed, Social security benefits disqualification 427w

Onslow, Mr Cranley
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 928, 944-6
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Costs 291w
Salmon, Canada 289w

Open government
Law reports 156w

Open Tech 520w
Upper Waiting Hall 520w

Operation Roadrunner
Disaster relief 558w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Questions
Concessionary television licences 211w
Japan, Non-tariff barriers 300
Strategic defence initiative, USA 147w

Opposition days
Elderly (06.06.85) 460-96
Handicapped (10.06.85) 640-86
Higher education (04.06.85) 206-42
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 761-804
Speakers rulings & statements (03.06.85) 61
Wages councils (06.06.85) 497-536
Wales (04.06.85) 162-205
Young people (11.06.85) 805-45

Orders & regulations
Bypasses 265w
Industrial health & safety 201w
Long Sutton & Sutton Bridge bypass 265w

Ordnance Survey
Copyright 315w
Income 315w

Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States 299w
Overseas aid 299w

Origin marking
Judgments 491w

Orkney
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 11

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 4
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 8-9
Coal mining, Industrial relations 13

Orthopaedics
Hospital waiting lists 167w

Oslo Convention (10.06.85) 687-728

Outgoers scheme 93w, 293w, 557w

Outpatients
Pharmacies 363w

Overloading offences 437-8w
Lorries 437-8w

Overseas aid 565w
Disaster relief 636-8
El Salvador 9w
Gibraltar 306w
National income 298w
Nicaragua 297w
Opposition days (11.06.85) 761-804
Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States 299w
Palestine 298-9w
Sri Lanka 407w
United Nations 298w

Overseas Development Administration
Disclosure of information 436w
Official secrets 388w

Overseas loans
Hydroelectric power 391w

Overseas students
Scholarships 9-10w
Student numbers 24w

Overseas trade 14-6w
Highlands of Scotland 174w
Human rights 174w
Israel 487-8w
Romania 176w
South Africa 436
Western Isles 174w

Overtime
Metropolitan Police 425
Nurses 426w

Owen, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 924-30, 982
Questions
State earnings related pension scheme 1009

Own resources (14.06.85) 1124

Owner occupied housing
London docklands 53w
London Docklands Development Corporation 323w
Share ownership 1010

Oxford Circus 530-1w

Oxford Circus station 380w, 583w
Fires 380w, 530-1w, 583w, 629

Page, Sir John
Debates etc
Sri Lanka, Political refugees (03.06.85) 57

Page, Mr Richard
Questions
Aid financed trade, Manufactured goods 565w
Business in the Community, Government grants 288

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc
Appropriation (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (05.06.85) 393-9
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1029
Questions
Dairy farming, Northern Ireland 1009-10
Elections, Northern Ireland 1006
Police informers, Northern Ireland 1001-2
Royal Ulster Constabulary 996
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Police stations 536w

Palace of Westminster
Boats 14

Palestine
Overseas aid 298-9w

Palestine Liberation Organisation
UN resolutions 307w

Paramedical staff
Manpower 104-6w
Pay settlements 434w

Paraquat
West Germany 422w

Parental leave 201w, 352w
EC action 352w
EC law 201w

Park, Mr George
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Redundancy 371w
Skillcentres 404w

Parking
Buses 413w, 627

Parliamentary constituencies
City of Manchester 457-8w

Parliamentary elections (12.06.85) 875

Parris, Mr Matthew
Questions
Express coach services 626-7

Parry, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Football hooliganism (11.06.85) 868-70, 871, 872
Questions
Baton rounds, Injuries 152w, 247w
Baton rounds, Northern Ireland 246-7w
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 1-2
Business statement 1020
China, Prime Minister 435w
Civil service unions 9w
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 297w
Falkland Islands, Ministers visits abroad 144w
Football, Safety 462w
Grenada, Foreign policy 77w
Grenada, Prime Minister 5w
Jordan, Official visits 389w
Liverpool Football Club 300-1w
National Bus Company, Pensions 150w
Prime Minister official engagements 193w, 389w, 511-2w
Unemployment 393-4w

Part-time employment 59w, 354w, 396w, 405w
Employment level 396w
Family doctors 224w
Low pay 404w
Supplementary benefits 551w
Wages councils 747-8

Passenger transport executives
Expenditure 159-60w
Passengers 157-8w
Railway transport 530w

Passengers
Buses 157-8w
Passenger transport executives 157-8w

Patchett, Mr Terry
Questions
Local government reform, Residuary bodies 461w
Police records, Disclosure of information 207w

Patents
Drugs 327w

Patients
Dentistry 98w

Patten, Mr Chris, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Debates etc
Appropriation (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (05.06.85) 409-12
Historic Churches (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (11.06.85) 847-9, 865-8
Questions
Air routes, Northern Ireland 538w
Airports, Northern Ireland 539w
Bridges, Northern Ireland 541-2w
Bus services, Privatisation 368w
Castledawson bypass 542w
Council house sales, Northern Ireland 534-5w
Cycleways, Northern Ireland 367-8w
Divis flats, Asbestos 245-6w
Divis flats, Demolition 245w
Divis flats, Housing improvement 245w
Driving tests, Northern Ireland 367w
Family income supplements, Northern Ireland 425w
House renovation grants, Northern Ireland 1005
Housing benefits, Northern Ireland 260w
Land drainage, Lough Ross 554w
Mater Hospital, Development plans 246w
Midwives, Northern Ireland 369w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Construction costs 245w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Testing 246w
Nurses, Northern Ireland 369w, 426w, 537-8w
Public sector housing, Northern Ireland 539w
Public sector housing sales, Northern Ireland 1005
Retirement pensions, Northern Ireland 367w, 425-6w
Richmond Centre, Londonderry 540-1w
Road construction, Northern Ireland 367w
Sites of special scientific interest, Northern Ireland 368w
Social security recipients, Northern Ireland 425w
Supplementary benefits, Young people 425w
Transport subsidies, Northern Ireland 426w
Water treatment, Caugh Hill 540w
Wetlands, Northern Ireland 539-40w

Patten, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security
Debates etc
Nurses, Pay (04.06.85) 280, 281-4
Questions
Antenatal clinics 232w
Antismoking campaign, Members 180-1w
Autism, West Midlands 184w
Barnsley Hospital, Hospital waiting lists 432w
Care proceedings, Child care 552w
Childbirth, Anaesthetics 434w
Children, Accidents 592w
Cochlear implants, Children 184w
Diabetes, Disposable syringes 365w
Diet & disease, Artificial sweeteners 106w
District health authorities, Privatisation 481-6w
Drug abuse, Sussex 592w
Drugs, Testing 95-6w
Educational health services 232w
Educational health services, Expenditure 232w
Educational health services, Statistics 229-30w
Elderly, Health services 100w
Elderly, Lancashire 584-6w
Elderly, Population distribution 99-100w
Health, Social class 230w
Health hazards, Crop spraying 100w
Health service staff, Repairs & maintenance 360w
Home helps, Elderly 102-3w
Hospital beds, Elderly 103w
Hospital waiting lists, Hip replacements 96w
Hospital waiting lists, X rays 432w
Hospitals, Complaints 481w
Hospitals, Fires 96w
Hypertension, Screening 233w
International Year of Disabled People 97w
Kidney machines 104w
Meals on wheels, Newham 236w
Moorfields Eye Hospital, Glaucoma 141w
Natural radioactivity, health hazards 543-4w
NHS, Prison medical services 361-2w
NHS complaints 433w
NHS complaints, Community health councils 433w
NHS complaints, Community health services 432-3w
NHS complaints, Private hospitals 433w
NHS complaints, Special health authorities 549w
NHS complaints, Sub judice 433w
Nursing homes, Licensing 544w
Nutrition & health 289w
Old peoples homes, Greater London 544w
Old peoples homes, Lancashire 544w
Pensioners, Ethnic minorities 366w
Philippines, Ethnic minorities 107w
Poliomyelitis, Vaccination 183w
Population 284-5w
Population projection, Sex distribution 103w
Pregnant women, Leather & fur industries 285-6w
Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Welwyn 96w
Research 232-3w
Residential care, Greater London 545-6w
Residential care, Lancashire 476w
Residential care, Local authorities 545w
Reyes syndrome, Death 182-3w
Reyes syndrome, Northern Ireland 181w, 183w
Rubella, Vaccination 427w
Smoking related diseases, Costs 110w
Social workers, Manpower 238w
Special hospitals, Complaints 481w
Surrogate mothers 478w
Tinnitus maskers 225w
Unemployed, Death 360w
Unemployment, Health 359w
Welfare rights officers 587w

Pattie, Mr Geoffrey, Minister of State for Information Technology
Questions
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Privatisation 134w

Pavitt, Mr Laurie
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 552
Handicapped (10.06.85) 643, 654, 674-8
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1159
Questions
Antismoking campaign, Members 180-1w
Business statement 448
District health authorities, Managers 140w
Drug abuse 433
House of Commons procedure, Private Members Bills 15
Moorfields Eye Hospital, Glaucoma 141w
NHS, Management 138-9w
Nurses, Back pain 473w
Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee 358w

Pawsey, Mr J F
Debates etc
Social security (03.06.85) 50
Questions
Alternative energy, Energy forecasting 526w
Alternative energy, Energy research 525-6w
Alternative energy, Government grants 525w
British residents abroad, Business travel 270w
Building regulations 465w
Nigeria, Disclosure of information 270w
Nigeria, Personal safety 270w
Occupational therapists 474w
Occupational therapists, Vacancies 431w
Office of Telecommunications, British Telecom 324w
Sizewell B, Costs 527w
Wave power, Energy costs 526-7w
Wave power, Energy research 527w
Wave power, Expenditure 525-6w
Wave power, Norway 526w

Pay beds
Peel hospital 351w

Pay Review bodies 5-6w, 190-2w, 351w, 366-7w, 512w
Pay 512w

PAYE 73w, 293w

Paymaster-General
House of Commons questions 82w

Peace negotiations
Middle East 307w, 750

Pearce, Idris 513w, 548-9w
Conflict of interests 548-9w
Pay 548w

Peat Marwick Mitchell 112w

Pedestrian crossings
St Stephens Entrance 21w

Peel Hospital 351w
Pay beds 351w

Pendry, Mr Tom
Questions
Employment level, Tameside 353w
Sports Council 875-6

Penhaligon, Mr David
Debates etc
Wages councils (06.06.85) 497-502
Questions
Electoral reform, Local government elections 210w
Employment level 743
Hospital waiting lists, Hip replacements 96w

Trade union elections, Trade union officials 402-3w

Pensioners
Ethnic minorities 366w, 586w
Exceptional needs payments 228w
Heating (12.06.85) 893-5
State earnings related pension scheme 241w
Supplementary benefits 235w
Telephone charges (12.06.85) 893-5

Pensioners Heating & Communications Bill 1984/85
1R (12.06.85) 893-5

Pensions
National Bus Company 150w, 371-2w

Perry Oaks Sludge Works 52w

Personal records
Computers in government departments 5-6w

Personal safety
Nigeria 270w

Pest control
Birds 423w
Woolwich Arsenal 423w

Pesticide residues
Agricultural research 422w
World Health Organisation 580w

Pesticides
Accidents 56w
Codes of practice 88-9w
Dieldrin 355w
Dioxin 289-90w
Environment 89w
Exports 14w
Health education 56w
Research 580-1w
Safety 89w
Safety information 89w
2 4 5-T 261w

Pesticides safety precautions scheme 290w

Petroleum
Land drilling 876-7

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee 358w

Pharmacies
Outpatients 363w

Pharmacists
Pay settlements 358w

Philippine Airlines 196w
Air routes 196w
Landing rights 196w

Philippines
Balance of trade 15-6w
Ethnic minorities 107w

Philips
Factory closures 298-9

Phoenix companies 173-4w

Piers 197w, 203w
Greater London Council 197w
River Thames 197w

Pigmeat
Food consumption 88w

Pike, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 320-1
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 571w
Bus services, Privatisation 370w
European Regional Development Fund, Textile industry 564w
Government assistance to industry, North West region 174w
Holloway Prison, Mentally disturbed offenders 493w
Immigration rules, Sex discrimination 426-7
Middle East 73-4w
National Coal Board 7
Prime Minister official engagements 193w, 389w
Urban programme 459w

Pirate radio stations 11-2w
Advertising 96-7w

Planning appeals
Hillingdon 316w

Planning blight
Land drilling 514w

Planning permission
Dorset (12.06.85) 985-94
Falkland Islands 559w
Health Services Act 1980 360-1w
Private hospitals 360-1w
Property development 316w
Small businesses 49-50w, 463w

Plumstead
St Nicholas Hospital 285w

Plutonium
Construction 305w
Disclosure of information 295w
Magnox reactors 295w
Members correspondence 571w
Production 295w

Plymouth
Poultry meat 420-1w
Teacher training 509w

Plymouth Marine Events Base Bill 1984/85 (06.06.85) 423
3R Order Read (05.06.85) 285

Points of order
Speakers rulings & statements (05.06.85) 330

Poisoning
Members secretaries (05.06.85) 374-5
Wood preservatives 56w

Police
Accountability 432
Drug abuse 208w
Injuries 19w
Inquiries 303-4w
Manpower 213w, 424-5
Newham 498w
Social security abuse 226w
Vacancies 209w

Police & Criminal Evidence Act 212-3w

Police authorities 432
Manpower 214w

Police Complaints Authority 385w, 492w
Official cars 492w

Police custody
Kirkby 494-5w
Pupils 494-5w

Police equipment
Water cannon 20w

Police Federation 206w

Police informers
Northern Ireland 1000-2

Police national computer 382-3w
Missing persons 383-4w
Motor vehicle theft 384w

Police national reporting centre 20w, 211w
Inquiries 211w

Police powers
Evidence 212-3w

Police protection 533w

Police records
Disclosure of information 207w, 284w
Rape 214w
Social security abuse 181w

Police stations
Royal Ulster Constabulary 536w

Police vehicles
Computers 19w
Northumbria 441w
Road accidents 441w

Poliomyelitis
Vaccination 183w

Political advertising (05.06.85) 331-3

Political levy
Trade unions 398-9w, 739-41

Political prisoners
Chile 75-6w
Namibia 220w
South Africa 220w
USSR 272w, 301w, 309w

Political refugees
Dikko, Umaru 208w
Immigration controls 303w
Sri Lanka 215-6w
Tamils 302-3w, 423-4, 431-2

Pollution
Crop spraying 356w

Pollution control
Hazardous wastes 49w

Pollution monitoring
Nuclear power stations 269w

Polytechnic of North London 163-4w
Teacher training 163w

Polytechnics
Educational finance 218w
Research finance 217-8w, 331-2w
Student numbers 218w

Pool Competitions Act 1971 (Continuance) Order 1985 (04.06.85) 154, (13.06.85) 1115

Popplewell Committee see Football Safety Review

Population 284-5w

Population distribution
Elderly 99-100w

Population projection
Sex distribution 103w

Porter, Mr Barry
Debates etc
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 30

Portillo, Mr Michael
Questions
Dolphins 203w
Local government reform, Residuary bodies 159-61w

Portsmouth
Unemployment 577w

Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority 300w, 563w
Privatisation 300w

Portugal
EC accession 528-9w

Post Office
Directors 391w
Managers 390w

Post office closures 285-7
Shrewsbury 286

Post Office Users Council
Postal deliveries 565w

Postage stamps
Retail establishments 390w

Postal deliveries
Post Office Users Council 565w

Postgraduate students
Student numbers 26-8w

Poultry
Nature conservation 412w

Poultry meat
Imports 420-1w
Plymouth 420-1w

Powell, Rt Hon J Enoch
Debates etc
Appropriation (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (05.06.85) 399-401
Historic Churches (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (11.06.85) 847, 851-7
Public petitions (07.06.85) 597

Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1145-51
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, Private Members motion (07.06.85) 611
Questions
Elections, Northern Ireland 1005-6
Medical Research Council, Research finance 466w
Wakeham, John, Marriage 436

Powell, Mr Ray
Debates etc
Handicapped (10.06.85) 680-2
Wages councils (06.06.85) 504
Questions
Coal mining, Redundancy 9

Powell, Mr William
Questions
Armagh Prison, Body searches 153w

Power industry disconnections
Social security benefits rules 589-90w

Power station closures 462w
Nuclear power stations 462w

Power stations
Acid rain 318w
Northern Ireland 998-9

Powley, Mr John
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 899
Questions
Dept of Education & Science, Cash limits 511-2w

Prefabricated housing
Building repairs 881

Pregnancy counselling 428-9w
NHS 428w

Pregnancy tests
NHS 428w

Pregnant women
Leather & fur industries 285-6w
Screening 239-40w

Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Debates etc
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 772

Pre-school education
Road safety 4w

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc
Wages councils (06.06.85) 504, 514
Young people (11.06.85) 814, 815, 816, 818
Questions
Trade unions, Political levy 740-1
Unemployment, EC countries 170-2w
Wages councils 399w

Prescription charges exemptions 432w

Prescriptions
Appeals 549-50w
Hospital doctors 363w

Press briefings 302w
Television 302w

Press releases
Speakers rulings & statements (04.06.85) 155, (05.06.85) 306

Prevention of Terrorism Acts 206w

Preventive medicine
Dental services 97w

Price, Sir David
Debates etc
Social security (03.06.85) 43
Questions
Animal experiments, Animal cruelty 214w
Armed forces strength 149w
British Rail Southern Region, Rolling stock 3-4w
Coastal shipping, Italy 375-6w
Defective housing, Official publications 516-7w
Employment level, Part-time employment 396w
France, Coastal shipping 4w
Insolvency, Liability 178w

Price differences
Drugs 359w

Price reductions
Drugs 363w

Prices
School meals 419w
Spectacles 475w
Tucano aircraft 304w

Primary education
Ballyhalbert 153w
Teacher training 569w

Primary health care
Inner city areas 234w
Inner London Boroughs 234w

Prime Minister
China 435w
Grenada 5w

Prime Minister domestic visits
Gainsborough 128w
Lambeth 128-9w

Prime Minister official engagements 129w, 193w, 389w, 511-2w
Shamir, Yitzhak 193w

Prime Ministers questions
Speakers rulings & statements (13.06.85) 1011-2

Prison accommodation
Holloway Prison 561w
Leeds Prison 385-6w
Stafford Prison 494w

Prison administration
Holloway prison 493-4w
Womens prisons 493-4w

Prison discipline
Sutcliffe, Peter 587w

Prison education services
Prison staff 154w

Prison hospitals
Complaints 385w

Prison medical services
Complaints 209w
Expenditure 495-7w
NHS 361-2w

Prison overcrowding
Hull Prison 153-4w
Leeds Prison 153-4w

Prison population 385w
National Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders 205-6w
Youth custody 385w

Prison sentences
Magistrates courts 492-3w
Northern Ireland 82-3w
Scotland 80w
Women 80w, 82-3w
Young offenders 495w

Prison staff 19w
Conditions of employment 154w
Industrial disputes 497w
Prison education services 154w

Prisoners
Crimes of violence 498-9w
Homicide 443-4w
Injuries 382w
Nutritional needs 386w

Prisoners on remand 20-1w

Prisoners rights 209w

Prisons (14.06.85) 1123
Construction costs 154w
Costs 382w
Dental services 495-7w
Northern Ireland 472-3w
Sports facilities 382w

Private Bills
Small businesses 441w

Private companies
Directors 390-1w
Government contracts 251w

Private education
Pupil-teacher ratios 465w

Private hospitals
NHS complaints 433w
Planning permission 360-1w

Private investment
Manufacturing industries 67-8w

Private Members Bills 195w
House of Commons procedure 15

Private Members motions
Speakers rulings & statements (07.06.85) 545
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85 437, 438, (07.06.85) 608-11

Private Members time
House of Commons division of time (07.06.85) 608-11

Private rented housing 456w
Housing benefits 93w
Rent Acts 456w
Rent control 884-6

Private sector
Forests 219w

Privatisation
Airports 539w
British Aerospace 439w
British Airports Authority 197w, 413w
British Gas Corporation 1-4, 294w, 571w
British Shipbuilders 323w
British Telecom 134w, 491-2w
Britoil 562w, 571w
Bus services 368-72w
Buses 150w
District health authorities 481-6w
Dockyards 147w
Fees & charges 439w
Gas supply industry 194w
Government Communications Headquarters 511w
Industry 172w
London docklands railway 379w
NHS 198w, 543w, 551w, 563w, 572w
Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority 300w
Productivity 172w
Refuse disposal 458w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines 134w
Shipbuilding 173w
Warships 173w
Water authorities 455-6w

Proctor, Mr K Harvey
Questions
A127, Road works 628
Employment level 397w
Heysham Power Station 4
House of Commons catering, Terrace pavilion 407w
Mental Health Act Commission, Codes of practice 475w
New towns, Greenbelt 161w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, Civil service dispersal 277-8w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, Employment opportunities 277w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, Manpower 276-7w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, Recruitment 276-7w
Nuclear power stations, Civil service dispersal 278w
Nuclear power stations, Safety standards 275w
Security, Northern Ireland 995-6
Water pollution, Norman Shaw building 411w

Procurement
British Rail 624-5
London Buses 158-9w
Nationalised industries 623-5
Nissan 491w

Product liability
EC action 261-2w

Production quotas
Appeals 421-2w
Milk 6w, 90w, 293w, 421-2w, 557w, 579w

Productivity
Privatisation 172w

Professional qualifications
Special education 163w, 505w

Professional & Executive Recruitment
Northern region 394-5w
Take-up of employment 403w

Proof of identity
Elections 1005-6

Propaganda
Local government expenditure (05.06.85) 331-3

Property development
Business premises 315w
Dorset (12.06.85) 985-94
Planning permission 316w

Property insurance
Sewers 327w

Property Services Agency 49w

Proportional representation
Local government elections (04.06.85) 156-61

Prosecutions
Animal fighting 209w, 304w
Armed forces officers 295-6w
Electricity (Factories Act) Special Regulations, 1908 572w
Illegal broadcasting 189w
Industrial safety 573w
"Killing for Company" 189w
Low pay 402w
National insurance contributions 365w
Offences against children 296w
Tree felling 252w
Wages councils 402w

Prostitutes 214w

Psychiatry
Holloway Prison 561w
Womens prisons 493w

Public Accounts Commission
House of Commons questions 10-1w

Public appointments
Burnham Committee 257w
Censorship 381-2w
Child Care Steering Group 497-8w
Community Nursing Services in Wales Review 264-5w
Falkland Islands 559-60w
International conferences 270-1w
Legionnaires disease 591w
NHS Management Board 513w, 547-8w
Residuary bodies 159-61w, 515w
Successor authorities 515w
Teachers Superannuation Working Party 329w

Public Bills
Speakers rulings & statements (14.06.85) 1124

Public expenditure 392w
Northern Ireland (05.06.85) 382-413
Research councils 510w

"Public Expenditure White Paper" 28w

Public footpaths
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 456w

Public Health Act 1936 318w, 327w

Public holidays 523-4w

Public inquiries
Edinburgh District Council 444w
Marine surveys 582w
Radioactive waste disposal 202w
Shipping accidents 582w

Public investment
Lear Fan 247w

Public order offences
Stonehenge 560w

Public order policing 213w
Industrial disputes 498w
Sportsgrounds 212w
Stonehenge 281w, 303w

Public petitions (07.06.85) 605
Ambulance services (07.06.85) 600, 603
Contraceptives (07.06.85) 606
London Docklands Development Corporation (07.06.85) 592
Matthew Brown (07.06.85) 600-1
M11 (07.06.85) 598-9
Nutrition & health (07.06.85) 597-8
Public sector housing (07.06.85) 591
Rate increases (07.06.85) 593-4
Rate support grants (07.06.85) 591
"Social Security Consultation Paper" (07.06.85) 602
Speakers rulings & statements (07.06.85) 592, 593, 595, 600, 605, (14.06.85) 1124
Transport Bill 1984/85 (07.06.85) 601
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85 (07.06.85) 594-5, 595-6, 596-7, 599-600, 602, 603-4, 604-5
Wakefield Prison (14.06.85) 1123

Public Records Office
Cash limits 556w

Public sector housing
Housing starts 42w
Northern Ireland 539w
Public petitions (07.06.85) 591
Tower Hamlets (07.06.85) 591

Public sector housing sales
Northern Ireland 1005

Publicity
Antismoking campaign 180-1w
Health Education Council 592w
Local government expenditure 456w
Railway timetables 150w
Rate limitation 456w
Rating revaluations 252w
Vaccination 427w

Punishment
VAT registration 500w

Public records 125-6w

Pupils
Police custody 494-5w

Pupil-teacher ratios
Private education 465w
Rudolf Steiner schools 465w

Quality control
Drugs 96w

"Quarterly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants" 427w

Queen Elizabeth II Hospital
Welwyn 96w

Quota of handicapped workers 738-9

R v Secretary of State for Social Services 465w

Racial discrimination
Judges 435w
Tribunals 435w

Radiation hazards 543-4w
Nuclear power stations 269w

Radice, Mr Giles
Debates etc
Higher education (04.06.85) 206-10, 241
Young people (11.06.85) 809
Questions
Youth training scheme, Further education colleges 337-48w

Radioactive waste disposal 311-2w, 462w
Public inquiries 202w
RAF Chivenor 467w
Wales 198w
Yelland Power Station 563w

Radioactive wastes
Gas-cooled reactors 38w
Magnox reactors 38w
Nuclear power stations 39w
Springfields 410w

RAF Caerwent 63-4w

RAF Chivenor 467w
Radioactive waste disposal 467w

RAF Greenham Common 64w, 168-9w
Grenades 168-9w
Security 64w

RAF Molesworth 63w
Grenades 63w

RAF Newton 61w

Raffan, Mr Keith
Debates etc
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 164

Rag flock 463w

Rag Flock & Other Filling Materials Act 1951 463w

Railway engineering 371w
Factory closures 371w

Railway property
British Railways Board 179-80w

Railway sidings
Government grants 157-8w

Railway timetables
Publicity 150w

Railway transport
London docklands 379w
Passenger transport executives 530w

Railway workers
Working hours 374w

Raison, Rt Hon Timothy, Minister of State for Overseas Development
Debates etc
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 767-76, 798-801
Questions
Africa, Disaster relief 638
El Salvador, Overseas aid 9w
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 297w, 636
Ethiopia, Food aid 436w, 634-5
Ethiopia, Food aid from UK 134-5w
Food aid from EC 194-5w
Food aid from EC, Africa 195w
Gibraltar, Ministers visits abroad 297w
Gibraltar, Tourism 297w
International Fund for Agricultural Development 298w
Nicaragua, Disclosure of information 9w
Nicaragua, Official secrets 436w
Nicaragua, Overseas aid 297w
Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, Overseas aid 299w
Overseas aid, Disaster relief 636-8
Overseas aid, National income 298w
Overseas students, Scholarships 9-10w
Palestine, Overseas aid 298-9w
Sri Lanka, Overseas aid 407w
UNESCO 298w

Rajab, Ahmed Walid 488-9w

Rampton Committee see Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups Committee of Inquiry

Randall, Mr Stuart
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 326
Food & Environment Protection Bill (HL), Rep (10.06.85) 715
Higher education (04.06.85) 235-6
Questions
Enterprise Ulster, Finance 1006-7
Youth training scheme, Confederation of British Industry 400w

Rape
Police records 214w

Rapeseed (13.06.85) 1025-32

Rate collection 323w

Rate demands 323w

Rate increases
Birmingham (07.06.85) 593-4
Public petitions (07.06.85) 593-4

Rate limitation
London boroughs 515w
Publicity 456w
Scotland 444w

Rate poundage 135w

Rate rebates
"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" 362w
Scotland 82w, 252w, (05.06.85) 334-81
Sheltered housing 150-1
Social security recipients 459w

Rate support grant penalties 459w
Islington 459w

Rate support grants
Finance 124w
Public petitions (07.06.85) 591
Sewers 318w
Tower Hamlets (07.06.85) 591
Wales 264w

Rateable value
Scotland 81w, 414-5w

Rates & rating 151
Housing benefits 286w
Social security recipients 286-7w
Unemployment 410w

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Questions
Pirate radio stations 11-2w

Rating revaluations
Publicity 252w
Scotland (03.06.85) 62-112, 252w, (05.06.85) 334-81

Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill 1984/85
81-2w, 252w, 351w
2R (03.06.85) 62-112
Money res (03.06.85) 112
Com Rep & 3R (05.06.85) 334-81

Reading Prison 21w

Records of achievement 125-6w
Secondary education 125-6w

Recruitment
European Foundation 220w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate 276-7w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 536w
Skilled workers 292-3

Recycling 175w

Redshank geese 412w

Redundancy
Bank of England 440-1w
British Rail Engineering 371w
Coal mining 9, 194w
European Commission 502w
Gas supply industry 426w
Local government reform 36w, 352w
Tobacco industry 452w

Redundancy pay
European Commission 536w

Re-employment
Civil servants 502w

Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Debates etc
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 28
Questions
BBC external services 555w
Wages councils, Statistics 745-6

Rees, Rt Hon Peter, Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Questions
Central-local government relations, Treasury 392w
Financial management unit 294w
Government departments, Manpower 111-2w
Manufacturing industries, Industrial production 250w
Public expenditure 392w

"Reform of Social Security Consultation Paper" (03.06.85) 34-51, 139w, 151-2, 237-8w, 286-8w, 362w, 431w, (06.06.85) 460-96, 504-5w, (07.06.85) 602, (10.06.85) 640-86
Costs 362w
Rate rebates 362w

Refrigeration
Northern Ireland 426-7w

Refugee camps 170w
Angola 170w

Refugees
Honduras 77w

Refuse disposal
Privatisation 458w

Regional aid
Employment opportunities 452w
Expenditure 11-2w
Shipbuilding 453w
West Midlands 289-90

Regional airports 301

Regional health authorities
Expenditure 236-7w, 589w

Regional planning & development
Government laboratories 173w
Industrial research 173w
Tourist industry 301
Wales 558w

Rehabilitation centres 406-7w
Manpower 406w

Religious education
Curriculum 331w
Secondary education 330-1w

Remand in custody 20-1w
Administrative delays 207w
Northern Ireland 83w
Scotland 79w
Women 79w, 83w

Rent Acts 48w, 884-6
Private rented housing 456w

Rent control
Private rented housing 884-5, 886

Rented housing
London docklands 323w

Renton, Mr Tim, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Questions
Aid financed trade, Finance 558w
BBC external services 555w
Beausire, William 75w
Berlin 76w
Berlin, Armed forces deployment 76-7w
Bilateral aid, Agriculture 558-9w
Black, John, Homicide 307w
British residents abroad, Business travel 270w
Central America, Military attaches 308w
Chile, Armed forces training 407w
Chile, Arms embargoes 409w
Chile, Arms exports 407w
Chile, Foreign policy 75w
Chile, Human rights 75w, 409w
Chile, National territory 409w
El Salvador, Armed forces officers 77w
El Salvador, Elections 307-8w
Ethiopia, Lorries 558w
Falkland Islands Development Corporation 559-60w
Falkland Islands Development Corporation, Investment 560w
Gibraltar, National insurance 306w
Greece, Foreign relations 136w
Grenada, Foreign policy 77w
Harding, William 75w
Hess, Rudolph 76w
Honduras, Refugees 77w
House of Commons questions, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 74w
Israel, Overseas trade 487-8w
Lembach, Pedro 75-6w
Sri Lanka, British embassies 220-1w
Sri Lanka, Civil disorder 221-2w
Sri Lanka, Entry clearances 221w
Syrian Arab Republic, Embassies 488-9w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 270-1w
United Nations, Women 282w
USA, Banks 488w
USA, Foreign trade 488w
William of Orange, Anniversaries 490w

Rents
Mobile homes 460w

Repairs & maintenance
Gravelly Hill viaduct 376-7w
Health service staff 360w
HMS Euryalus 424w
HMS Otter 424w
Motorways 265w
River Thames 372w

"Report of a Review of the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980" 49w

Republic of Ireland 537w
Armed forces training 149w
Explosives 247-8w, 260w
Terrorism 260w

Research 232-3w
Birds 273w
Food additives 129w
Forests 350w
Multiple occupation 33-4w, 203w
M25 266w
M42 266w
Pesticides 580-1w
Road safety 629-30

Research assistants 16-7

Research councils
Public expenditure 510w

Research finance
Medical Research Council 466w
Polytechnics 217-8w, 331-2w
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1125-90

Residential care
Greater London 545-6w
Lancashire 476w, 586w
Local authorities 545w
Supplementary benefits 544-5w

Residuary bodies 34-8w, 159-61w, 197w, 316-7w, 461w, 515w, 564-5w
Costs 564-5w
Greater London 317w
Local government reform 35-8w, 159-61w, 316w, 461w, 564-5w
Public appointments 159-61w, 515w

Resignations
Armed forces 146-7
Computer staff 249-50w
Navy 147

Resource Allocation Working Party 230-1w

Restrictive trade practices
IBM 452w, 503w

Retail establishments
Postage stamps 390w

Retail trade
Wages councils 400w

Retirement pensions 152
British residents abroad 546w
Expenditure 425-6w
Islington 101w
Newham 236w
Northern Ireland 367w, 425-6w
Social security reviews 552w

"Review of Sweeteners in Food" 130w

Reyes syndrome 181-3w
Analgesics 182w
Committee on Safety of Medicines 182w

Death 182-3w
Northern Ireland 181w, 183w

Rhizomania
Sugar beet 420w

Rhodes James, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1174-5
Questions
Namibia, Foreign policy 555w

Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Debates etc
Social security (03.06.85) 47-8

Richardson, Ms Jo
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 584
"Social Security Consultation Paper", Public petitions (07.06.85) 602
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85, Public petitions (07.06.85) 602
Questions
Dalkon shield 473w
Holloway Prison, Womens prisons 207-8w
Parental leave, EC action 352w
Rape, Police records 214w
Rubella, Vaccination 427w
UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 270-1w
United Nations, Women 272w

Richmond Centre 540-1w
Londonderry 540-1w

Riding hats 15w
Standards specifications 15w

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas, *Secretary of State for Transport*
Debates etc
Airports, Ministerial statements (05.06.85) 307-29
Questions
Air safety, Testing 150w
Air transport, Competition 622
Air transport, Eastern Europe 622
Air transport, France 622
Air transport, Western Europe 622-3
British Airports Authority, Privatisation 197w
British Rail, Capital investment 158w
British Rail, Locomotives 623-4
British Rail, Procurement 624-5
British Rail, Rolling stock 624
Bus services, Privatisation 369-70w
Central-local government relations, Dept of Transport 375w
Coastal shipping, Italy 375-6w
House of Commons questions, Dept of Transport 3w
Marques, Shipping accidents 582w
Motorway service areas, Telephone systems 375w
M1, Motorway service areas 581w
M62, Motorway service areas 3w
National Bus Company, Pensions 371-2w
Oxford Circus station, Fires 380w, 530-1w, 583w
Passenger transport executives, Expenditure 159-60w
Passenger transport executives, Passengers 157-8w
Railway sidings, Government grants 157-8w
Road construction, Channel tunnel 156w
Roads, Motorways 380w

Rifkind, Mr Malcolm, *Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
African National Congress, South Africa 220w
Angola, Human rights 76w
Angola, Refugee camps 170w
Arafat, Yasser, Speeches 408w
Central America, EC external relations 223w
COCOM, Civil servants secondment 527-8w
Council of Ministers 78-9w
Europassport, Gibraltar 170w
European Commission, Redundancy pay 536w
European Communities, Ealing 169w
European Foundation, Recruitment 220w
Hong Kong, Civil service pensions 408w
Kampuchea, UN General Assembly 488w
Namibia, Foreign policy 555w
Namibia, International Court of Justice 220w
Namibia, Political prisoners 220w
Nicaragua, Bananas 222w
Nicaragua, EC external relations 222w
Nigeria, Disclosure of information 270w
Nigeria, Personal safety 270w
Nuclear non proliferation, UN resolutions 487w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 528w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, Libyan Arab Republic 408-9w
UN High Commissioner for Refugees, SWAPO 170w
USA, Export controls 407-8w
Victims Against Terrorism 408w
Wallenberg, Raoul 272w, 309w
Zimbabwe, British Citizenship 136-7w

Right to buy 511w

Rights of way
Administrative delays 410w
Cumbria 410w

Riot control weapons
Armed forces 423w
Metropolitan Police 302w

River Owenreagh 554-6w

River pollution
Northern Ireland 554-6w

River Roe 554-6w

River Thames 14, 197w, 372w
Piers 197w
Repairs & maintenance 372w

Road accidents 375w
Motorways 379w
Police vehicles 441w

Road construction 629-30
Channel tunnel 156w
Expenditure 372w, 374w
M3 374-5w
M11 437w
Northern Ireland 367w
Waltham Forest (07.06.85) 598-9

Road drainage 371w

Road safety 372w
M3 630-1
Pre-school education 4w
Research 629-30

Road safety barriers 4w, 630
A1 371w
A38 530w

Road salting & gritting
Midland link motorways 376w

Road signs 375w
A127 628-9
Basildon 372w
Northumberland 625
Rural areas 625-6
South West region 625-6

Road tax
Sub post offices 531-2w

Road Traffic Act 1972 437-8w

Road transport
Ethiopia 636

Road works
A127 628
Costs 367w, 376-7w
Expenditure 372w
Motorways 265w
M6 377w

Roads
Greater London 4w
Motorways 380w

Robbery
Homicide 443-4w

Roberts, Mr Allan
Questions
Alternative energy, Expenditure 526w
Radioactive waste disposal 462w

Roberts, Mr Ernie
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 564

Roberts, Mr Wyn, *Under-Secretary of State for Wales*
Questions
Community Nursing Services in Wales Review, Public appointments 264-5w
Dental technicians, Wales 389w
NHS, Privatisation 198w
Orthopaedics, Hospital waiting lists 167w
Radioactive waste disposal, Wales 198w
Tinnitus, Wales 168w
Welfare rights officers, Wales 557w
Welsh Water Authority, Consumer protection 264w

Robertson, Mr George
Questions
Import penetration, Far East 494w

Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Questions
British Leyland, Investment 295-6
Talbot UK 290

Robinson, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Appropriation (No 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (05.06.85) 398, 407

Rochdale
Unemployment 199w

Roe, Mrs Marion
Questions
Greater London Council, House of Commons questions 124w

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc
Higher education (04.06.85) 231
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 169

Rolling stock
British Rail 624
British Rail Southern Region 3-4w

Rolls-Royce Aeroengines
Privatisation 134w

Romania
Overseas trade 176w

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Questions
Defective housing, Departmental circulars 40-2w

Rose, W H
Members correspondence 434w

Ross, Mr Stephen
Questions
Air transport, Eastern Europe 622
Arrests, Northern Ireland 83w
Local government expenditure, Capital investment 458w
Natural gas, Northern Ireland 535w
Police national reporting centre, Inquiries 211w
Prison sentences, Women 80w, 82-3w
Remand in custody, Women 79w, 83w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 1003
Terrorism, Arrests 22w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 151-2w

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc
Historic Churches (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (11.06.85) 857-61
Questions
Bridges, Northern Ireland 541-2w
Castledawson bypass 542w
Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985 537w
Explosives, Northern Ireland 471w
Firearms, Northern Ireland 472w, 542w, 553w

Firearms certificates, Northern Ireland 471w, 556w
Maghaberry Prison 542w
Maghaberry Prison, Construction materials 473w
Maze Prison, Hunger strikes 472w
Richmond Centre, Londonderry 540-1w
River pollution, Northern Ireland 554-6w
Water treatment, Caugh Hill 540w

Rotherham
House renovation grants 879

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Handicapped (10.06.85) 663-5
Questions
Child Care Steering Group, Public appointments 497-8w
Customs & Excise, Drug crimes 393w
Vacancies 742
VAT, Imports 263w

Rowe committee see Housing Benefit Review

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Questions
Coal mining, Wales 449w
Nuclear power stations, Winfrith 11-2

Royal Bank of Scotland Bill 1984/85
Order for consideration of Lords amendts read (04.06.85) 137, (05.06.85) 285
Lords amendts (06.06.85) 423
Royal assent (13.06.85) 1067

Royal British Legion
World War I 304w

Royal College of Midwives 300w

Royal College of Nursing 5w

Royal College of Physicians 102w

Royal docks 379w

Royal Festival Hall 43w

Royal ordnance factories
Enfield 143-4w

Royal parks 42-4w

Royal Ulster Constabulary 260-1w, 469-70w, 536w, 996, 1003
Complaints against police 259w
Police stations 536w
Recruitment 536w

Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve 472w

Rubella
Vaccination 427w

Rudolf Steiner schools 465-6w
Pupil-teacher ratios 465w
Teacher training 465-6w

Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Debates etc
Higher education (04.06.85) 227-30
Questions
Football hooliganism 152

Rural areas
Bus services 627-8
Family doctors 225w
Road signs 625-6
Wales (04.06.85) 162-205

Ruthenium
Medical research 359w
Transport of hazardous materials 376w

SA 80 guns 143-4w
Firearms 143-4w

Sackville, Mr Tom
Questions
Drug abuse 433

Safety
Bus services 627-8
Buses 630
Children 450w
Consumer protection 450w
Contraceptives 549w
Cruise missile sites 147w
Express coach services 628
Football 462w
High rise flats 514w
Lorries 631
Nuclear power stations 11
Pesticides 89w
Sportsgrounds 429-30, 462-3w

Safety belts
Buses 630

Safety information
Pesticides 89w

Safety measures
Construction 203-4w
Crop spraying 380w

Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 (03.06.85) 21-33

Safety of Sports Grounds Working Party 462-3w

Safety standards
Asbestos 326-7w
Bus services 370-1w
Nuclear power stations 275w
Transport of hazardous materials 376w

Sailing boats
Antifouling paints 457w

Sale-or-return 501w
Imports 501w

Salmon
Canada 289w

Sanitaryware
Belgium (10.06.85) 730-6

Sanitation
Norman Shaw building 306w
Stafford Prison 494w

Saudi Arabia
Shipping 271w

Savage, Wendy 224-5w

Sayeed, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc
Nuclear non proliferation (06.06.85) 537-40
Questions
Block grant 412w

Schedule D income tax 65w

Scholarships
Overseas students 9-10w

School leaving 570w
GCE A level 570w
Leicester 747
Scotland 571-2w
Vocational guidance 57-8w

School leaving certificates
Scotland 572w

School meals 419w
Costs 505w
Local education authorities 362w
Prices 419w
Social security reviews 552w

School population 505-6w
Special education 505-10w

School teachers
Secondary education 330-1w
Vacancies 569w

Schools
Hazardous materials 553w, 556-7w
Health hazards 504w
Metallic marker pens 504w

Science & technology
Local government reform 563-4w

Science & technology policy
Research finance (14.06.85) 1125-90

Science & Technology Select Committee (HL) 446w

"Science & Technology Select Committee (HL) on Scientific Aspects of Forestry" 446w

Science education 332w
Curriculum 416w
Graduates 504w
Student numbers 334-6w

"Scientific Procedures on Living Animals White Paper" 207w, 214w

Scope of debate (05.06.85) 342, 375
Speakers rulings & statements (04.06.85) 158, 159, (06.06.85) 454, (07.06.85) 546, 547, 550-1, 562, 563, 564, 565, 571, (11.06.85) 820, (13.06.85) 1057, 1111, (14.06.85) 1151

Scotland 19-20
Agricultural machinery 445w
Agricultural services 445w
Airports 348w
Caravan sites 445-6w
Coal closure areas 18-9
Coal mining 194w
Crop spraying 274-6w
Dental students 533w
Dental technicians 347w
Detention centres 349-50w
Domestic rates 414-5w
Educational finance 447-8w
Elderly 80-1w
Family law (03.06.85) 113-26
Fish conservation 273w
Forestry 136w
Forests 349w
House renovation grants 882-3
Housing standards 882-3
Inquiries 310w
Legal aid 446w
List D schools 253-4w
Metallic marker pens 445w
Natural radioactivity 273-4w
NHS 572w
NHS finance 351w
Prison sentences 80w
Rate limitation 444w
Rate rebates 82w, 252w, (05.06.85) 334-81
Rateable value 81w, 414-5w
Rating revaluations (03.06.85) 62-112, 252w, (05.06.85) 334-81
Remand in custody 79w
School leaving 571-2w
School leaving certificates 572w
Specialist claims control units 546w
Teacher training 534w
Teachers 349w
Tinnitus maskers 251w
Tree planting 349w
Unemployment 135-6w
Veterinary services 350-1w, 445w
Youth training scheme 415w
Youth unemployment 136w

Scott, Mr Nicholas, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Armagh Prison, Body searches 153w, 368-9w
Arrests, Northern Ireland 83w
Baton rounds, Injuries 152w, 247w
Baton rounds, Northern Ireland 84w, 246-7w
Elections, Northern Ireland 1005-6
Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985 537w
Explosives, Northern Ireland 471w
Firearms, Northern Ireland 472w, 542w, 553w
Firearms certificates, Northern Ireland 471w, 556w
Higher education, Northern Ireland 534w
Local government elections, Northern Ireland 537w, 1006
Maghaberry Prison 542w
Maghaberry Prison, Construction materials 473w
Maze Prison, Hunger strikes 472w
Medical cards, Northern Ireland 1006
Metallic marker pens, Northern Ireland 553w
Primary education, Ballyhalbert 153w
Prison sentences, Women 82-3w
Remand in custody, Women 83w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 469-70w, 536w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Complaints against police 259w

Royal Ulster Constabulary, Police stations 536w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Recruitment 536w
Smith, Gary 470w
Student grants, Northern Ireland 137-8w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 151-2w

Scottish Development Agency
Holidays 571w

Scottish Grand Committee (13.06.85) 1034

Scottish Office
Cash limits 447w
House of Commons questions 80w

Scottish Special Housing Association (Limit of Advances) Order 1985 (03.06.85) 126

Screening
Cancer 233w
Cervical cancer 101-2w
Hypertension 233w
Pregnant women 239-40w

Sea pollution 202-3w

Sea Wolf 145w
Guided weapons 145w

Secondary education
Grammar schools 569-70w
Records of achievement 125-6w
Religious education 330-1w
School teachers 330-1w
Small businesses 173w
Wandsworth 257w

Secret ballot
Government grants 574-8w
Trade unions 574-8w

Security
Northern Ireland 535w, 995-7
RAF Greenham Common 64w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (13.06.85) 1085
Questions
Business statement 1019
Ruthenium, Medical research 359w
Ruthenium, Transport of hazardous materials 376w

Selective schools
Local education authorities 569-70w

Self-employed 463w
Employment level 396w

Self-mutilation 350w
Friarton Young Offenders Institution 350w

Sentencing
Young offenders 302w

Serjeant at Arms
Speakers rulings & statements (06.06.85) 456

Service industries
Youth employment 746-7

Severe disablement allowance
Blind 479-81w

Sewers
Motorways 371w
Occupiers liability 318w
Property insurance 327w
Rate support grants 318w

Sex discrimination
Immigration rules 426-8
Inner London Education Authority 466w
Treaties 272w

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 57w

Sex distribution
Population projection 103w

Sexual deviancy
Employment discrimination 57w

Sexual offences
Criminal records 210w

Shamir, Yitzhak
Prime Minister official engagements 193w

Share ownership 1010
Owner occupied housing 1010

Shares
British Telecom 134w, 491-2w
Northern Ireland 554w

***Shaw, Mr Giles**, Minister of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Football hooliganism (11.06.85) 870-4
Questions
Black, John, Homicide 303-4w
Broadcasting, Independent Broadcasting Authority 210w
Civil defence, NATO 211w
Commercial television 213-4w
Concessionary television licences 211w
Concessionary television licences, Bradford Metropolitan District Council 561w
Crime prevention, Lighting 492w
Demonstrations, Trafalgar Square 216w
Firearms 155-6w
Firearms certificates 155-6w
Libyan Peoples Bureau, Deportation 442w
Local government corruption, Cumbria 128w
Local radio, Licensing 211w
Metropolitan Police, Closed circuit television 441w
Metropolitan Police, Football 212w
Metropolitan Police, Riot control weapons 302w
Ministers domestic visits, Jersey 210w
Offences against children, Local government staff 210w
Police, Injuries 19w
Police, Manpower 213w
Police, Newham 498w
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 212-3w
Police authorities, Manpower 214w
Police Complaints Authority 385w
Police Complaints Authority, Official cars 492w
Police custody, Kirkby 494-5w
Police national computer 382-3w
Police national computer, Missing persons 383-4w
Police national computer, Motor vehicle theft 384w
Police national reporting centre 20w
Police national reporting centre, Inquiries 211w
Police records, Disclosure of information 284w
Police vehicles, Computers 19w
Police vehicles, Northumbria 441w
Public order offences, Stonehenge 560w
Public order policing, Stonehenge 281w, 303w
Rape, Police records 214w
St Stephens Entrance, Pedestrian crossings 21w
Television programmes, Deaf 210w
Transport & General Workers Union, Trade union elections 19w
Water cannon, Police equipment 20w
Water cannon, Testing 19-20w

Sheep scab
Wales 557w

Sheep worrying
Wales 91w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Debates etc
Young people (11.06.85) 805-12, 818, 832, 840-1
Questions
Beer 134w
Brewing industry, France 131w
Brewing industry, Imports 133w
Brewing industry, Subsidies 131w
Italy, Domestic appliances 17w
Philips, Factory closures 298-9
Road safety, Pre-school education 4w
Skillcentres 749
Skillcentres, Coal closure areas 58w
Washing machines 17w
Youth training scheme 741

Sheffield
Fires 521w

Sheltered housing
Rate rebates 150-1

Shersby, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Higher education (04.06.85) 216-9
Questions
Drugs, Patents 327w
Food labelling, EC action 291w
Housing & elderly, Housing Corporation 205w
Planning appeals, Hillingdon 316w

Shielsknowe
Forestry grants 166w

Shipbuilding
Average earnings 453-4w
Employment opportunities 453w
Government assistance to industry 453w
Manpower 405-6w
Merchant ships 453w
Pay 405-6w
Privatisation 173w
Regional aid 453w
Warships 452-3w, 503w

Shipbuilding Intervention Fund 453w

Shipping
Saudi Arabia 271w

Shipping accidents
Marques 562w, 582w
Public inquiries 582w

Shipping lanes
Minch 373w
Oil tankers 373w

Ships
North Sea 275w
Norway 275w

Shipyard closures 453w

Shop hours 207w

Shoplifting 426
Acquittals 426

Shops Act 1950 Committee of Inquiry 207w

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 574-7
Questions
House of Commons procedure, Private Members Bills 15

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 572, 583-4
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85 Public petitions (07.06.85) 599-600
Wages councils (06.06.85) 506-13
Questions
Community programme 744
Council housing, Ethnic minorities 460w
Divis flats, Asbestos 245-6w
Divis flats, Demolition 245w
Divis flats, Housing improvement 245w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Construction costs 245w
Sinn Fein 996
Temporary immigrants 423-4
Wages councils 399w, 746

Short, Mrs Renee
Debates etc
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1150, 1163-6
Questions
Adult education 257w
Autism, West Midlands 184w
Burnham Committee, Public appointments 257w
Drugs, Testing 102w
Earned income, West Midlands 67w, 251w
Euthanasia, Convictions 22w
Health services, Handicapped 102w

Higher education, Industry 218w
Hospital closures, Mental hospitals 184w
Hospital consultants 102w
Hospital staff 102w
Mercury, Health & Safety Executive 276w
Polytechnics, Educational finance 218w
Polytechnics, Research finance 217-8w, 331-2w
Pregnant women, Leather & fur industries 285-6w
Youth training scheme early leavers 58w

Short Brothers 62-4w, 305w

Short sharp shock treatment
Young offenders 211w

Shorthold tenancies 458w

Shotgun certificates 471w, 542w

Shrewsbury
Post office closures 286

Silkin, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 934-7

Silvester, Mr Fred
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 313

Sims, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Handicapped (10.06.85) 678-80
Sri Lanka, Political refugees (03.06.85) 54

Singapore International Airlines 197w

Single homeless
Hartlepool 584w

Sinn Fein 538w, 996-8

Sites of special scientific interest 316w, 460w
Forests 55w
Nature conservation (10.06.85) 639
Northern Ireland 368w

Sizewell B 527w
Costs 527w

Skeet, Mr T H H
Debates etc
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1160-3
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 3
Consumer protection law 324w
Property development, Business premises 315w

Skillcentre training agency 123-4w

Skillcentres 123-4w, 397w, 404w, 406-7w, 748-9
Coal closure areas 58w
Hampshire 578w
Middlesbrough 448w, 520w
Southampton 200w
Vacancies 578w

Skilled workers 293
Clothing industry 398w
Recruitment 292-3
Unemployment 293-4

Skimmed milk powder
Bedwas 131w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Business question time point of order (13.06.85) 1023
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 545-53, 566-7, 575, 577
Local Government (Proportional Representation), Motion to introduce Bill negatived (04.06.85) 158-60
Oral question time intervention (03.06.85) 17
Oral question time point of order (05.06.85) 302
Questions
Air fares 621
Armed forces, British citizenship 145
Business statement 1021
Coal mining, Dismissal 13
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 425
Employment opportunities 354w
Hospitals, Fires 96w
Housing, Capital investment 268w
Magistrates courts, Prison sentences 492-3w
Palace of Westminster, Boats 14
Part-time employment 59w
Prison population 385w
Prison population, Youth custody 385w
Slums 267w
Trade unions, Gifts & endowments 740
Unemployment 354-5w, 394w
Unemployment, Derbyshire 353-4w

Skyline Radio 96-7w

Slum clearance 204w

Slums 267w
House renovation grants 887-8

Small businesses 175w, 180w
Accounting 134w
Advisory services 177w
Audit 134w
Building regulations 318-23w
Bye laws 441w
Data banks 175w
Government contracts 296-7
Industrial finance 176w
Local Enterprise Week 175w
Planning permission 49-50w, 463w
Private Bills 441w
Secondary education 173w
Tax allowances 112-3w
Tax reform 173w
Training 177w
VAT threshold 500w, 501w

Small firms service 133w, 289

Small industrial workshops 327-8w

Smith, Mr Chris
Questions
ARWEN 37 antiriot guns 423w
Council housing, Housing improvement 266-7w
Forestry Commission, Advisory services 414w
Forests, Costs 413-4w
Housing standards 883
Metropolitan Police, Closed circuit television 441w
Metropolitan Police, Riot control weapons 302w
Multiple occupation, Research 203w

Smith, Mr Cyril
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 556, 560, 563
Questions
Mexico, State visits 752-3
Nissan, Procurement 491w
Unemployment 744

Smith, Sir Dudley
Questions
Youth employment, Service industries 746-7

Smith, Gary 470w

Smith, Mr Tim
Questions
Perry Oaks Sludge Works 52w

Smith Committee see Resource Allocation Working Party

Smoking related diseases 110w
Costs 110w

Smuggling
Explosives 260w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Debates etc
Historic Churches (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (11.06.85) 862-4
Questions
Angola, Human rights 76w
Angola, Refugee camps 170w
Armed forces training, Republic of Ireland 149w
Drugs, Quality control 96w
Drugs, Testing 95-6w
Family income supplements, Northern Ireland 425w
House renovation grants, Northern Ireland 1005
Housing benefits, Northern Ireland 260w
Midwives, Northern Ireland 369w
Midwives, Pay 300w
Nurses, Northern Ireland 369w, 426w, 537-8w
Retirement pensions, Northern Ireland 367w, 425-6w
Social security recipients, Northern Ireland 425w
Supplementary benefits, Young people 425w
UN High Commissioner for Refugees, SWAPO 170w

Snape, Mr Peter
Questions
British Rail, Procurement 625
Passenger transport executives, Railway transport 530w

Soames, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Heathrow 583w
Higher education, Engineering education 127-8w
Lower attaining pupils 127w
Rate support grants, Finance 124w
Secondary education, Records of achievement 125-6w
Student grants 126w
Trade union elections 57w
Transport & General Workers Union, Trade union elections 2w, 19w

Social class
Health 230w, 367w

Social fund 237w, 362w, 479w
Budget 237w

Social problems
Inner city areas 204w

Social security 437-8
Leader of the Opposition 150
Ministerial statements (03.06.85) 34-51

Social security abuse 223-4w, 474-5w
Departmental forms 181w
Dept of Health & Social Security 224w
Police 226w
Police records 181w

Social security appeals tribunals 140-1w

Social security benefits
Children 228w
Income tax 264w

Social security benefits disqualification
Unemployed 427w
Young people 366w

Social security benefits rates 481w
Child benefit 234w

Social security benefits reductions
Young people 365-6w

Social security benefits rules
Fuel bills 589-90w
Power industry disconnections 589-90w

"Social Security Consultation Paper"
Public petitions (07.06.85) 602

Social security payments
Banks 591w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 591w
EC countries 479-81w

Social security recipients 479w
Average earnings 360w
Board & lodging charges 229w
Council house waiting lists 513w
Doctors 427-8w
Housing benefits 286w, 360w
Islington 101w
Newham 235-6w
Northern Gas 358w
Northern Ireland 425w
Rate rebates 459w

Rates & rating 286-7w
Supplementary benefits 287w, 363-4w
Water charges 238w

Social security reviews 150-3, 237w, 419w, 431w 435-8, (06.06.85) 460-96, 504-5w, 551-2w, 1007-8
Attendance allowance 551-2w
Free school meals 419w, 504-5w
Funerals 551-2w
Handicapped 139w
Housing benefits 151, 551-2w
Occupational pensions 431w
Retirement pensions 552w
School meals 552w
State earnings related pension scheme 431w
Supplementary benefits 287-8w, 551-2w

Social services
Health services 230-1w

Social workers
Manpower 238w

Soley, Mr Clive
Questions
Holloway Prison, Mentally disturbed offenders 493w
Police, Manpower 425

Solicitor-General for Scotland
House of Commons questions 10w

Solicitors
Barristers (11.06.85) 755-60

Solicitors (Independent Complaints Procedure) Bill 1984/85
2R order read (07.06.85) 612

Solihull
Coal mining 677

Sound insulation
STOLport 269w

South Africa
African National Congress 220w
Interest groups 408w
Overseas trade 436
Political prisoners 220w
Sports 460w
Trade missions 565-8w

South Bedfordshire Health Authority 473-4w
Chiropodists 473-4w

South Brent 530w

South East region
Environment protection 877

South East Thames Regional Health Authority 285w, 589w

South Lakeland District Council 111w, 128w

South Uist 467w

South west region
Community programme 398w
Road signs 625-6

Southampton
Skillcentres 200w

Southwark
Council house sales 517w
Unemployment benefits 106w
SP-70 guns 63w

Spain
EC accession 390w, 528-9w
Inquiries 307w

Speaker and his deputies, *For rulings and statements see separate heading Speakers rulings & statements*
Debates etc
Amendments & new clauses (03.06.85) 113, 123, 124, (04.06.85) 162, 206, 245, (06.06.85) 460, 497, (07.06.85) 545, 609, (10.06.85) 687, 690, 699, 700, 723, (11.06.85) 761, 805, (12.06.85) 896
Disallowed questions (06.06.85) 424, (11.06.85) 751, (12.06.85) 877
Orders & regulations motions (10.06.85) 639
Private Members Bills, 2R order read (07.06.85) 612
Procedure (03.06.85) 26, 39, 42-3, 49, 57, 62, (04.06.85) 158, 227, 230, (05.06.85) 302, 322, 327, (06.06.85) 454, 499, 513, 531, 537, (07.06.85) 570, 573, 577, (11.06.85) 761, 847, (12.06.85) 898, 946, 959, 970, 973, (13.06.85) 1008, 1023, 1030, 1053, 1072, (14.06.85) 1142, 1187
Royal assent notified (13.06.85) 1067
Standing Order No 10 applications, Arts finance (06.06.85) 459
Standing Order No 10 applications, Coal mine closures (13.06.85) 1033-4
Standing Order No 10 applications, Immigration rules (03.06.85) 61

Speakers rulings & statements (04.06.85) 147
Business questions (13.06.85) 1019
Calling of Members (03.06.85) 59, 87, (05.06.85) 327, 328-9, (07.06.85) 573-4, (14.06.85) 1181, 1190
House of Commons Standing Committees (06.06.85) 457
House of Commons division of time (07.06.85) 545
House of Commons divisions (11.06.85) 845, (12.06.85) 892
House of Commons procedure (13.06.85) 1019
House of Commons questions (10.06.85) 639
House of Commons terrace (07.06.85) 607
Members (05.06.85) 302
Members conduct (04.06.85) 158, (05.06.85) 298, (06.06.85) 435, 436, (07.06.85) 563, 579, (13.06.85) 1006, 1011-2, 1022
Members interests (13.06.85) 1022, 1023
Members speeches (04.06.85) 162, (06.06.85) 492, (11.06.85) 823, (12.06.85) 896, (13.06.85) 1035
Members visits abroad (13.06.85) 1022, 1023
Ministerial speeches (06.06.85) 479
Ministerial statements (05.06.85) 328, (10.06.85) 639, (13.06.85) 1024
Ministers (05.06.85) 299-300
Opposition days (03.06.85) 61
Points of order (05.06.85) 330
Press releases (04.06.85) 155, (05.06.85) 306
Prime Ministers questions (13.06.85) 1011-2
Private Members motions (07.06.85) 545
Public Bills (14.06.85) 1124
Public petitions (07.06.85) 592, 593, 595, 600, 605 (14.06.85) 1124
Scope of debate (04.06.85) 158, 159, (06.06.85) 454, (07.06.85) 546, 547, 550-1, 562, 563, 564, 565, 571, (11.06.85) 820, (13.06.85) 1057, 1111, (14.06.85) 1151
Serjeant at Arms (06.06.85) 456
Standing Order No 10 applications (13.06.85) 1035
Supplementary questions (03.06.85) 6, 8, (10.06.85) 621, 629, (12.06.85) 881, 887
Unparliamentary expressions (13.06.85) 1009
Written questions (04.06.85) 155, (05.06.85) 306

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1027-8
European Communities (Finance) Bill, Point of order (14.06.85) 1124
Young people, Newham (03.06.85) 129
Questions
Business statement 1015
Civil service, Travelling expenses 67w
London docklands, Airports 52w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Employment opportunities 410w
London docklands railway 379w
London docklands railway, Construction costs 379w
London docklands railway, Fares 379w
London docklands railway, Privatisation 379w
Overseas aid, Disaster relief 636-8
School meals, Local education authorities 362w
Sound insulation, STOLport 269w
Woolwich, ferry 372w

Special constables
Nuclear power stations 193w

Special education
Administrative delays 506w
Professional qualifications 163w, 505w
School population 505-10w
Teacher training 505w

Special health authorities
NHS complaints 549w

Special hospitals
Complaints 481w

Special schools
Teachers 505w

Special steels 173-4w
Monopoly 173-4w

Specialist claims control units 474-5w, 546w
Scotland 546w

Specified documents 1005-6

Spectacles
Prices 475w

Speech therapists
Medical education 359w
Pay 183w, 430w
Students 183w

Speeches
Arafat, Yasser 408w

Speed, Mr Keith
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 918, (13.06.85) 1068-70
Questions
Driving tests, Kent 582w

Speed limits
Buses 373w
Motorways 373w

Speller, Mr Tony
Questions
Broadcasting, Independent Broadcasting Authority 210w
Civil service foreign service allowance 144-5
Drugs, Price differences 359w
Energy conservation, Departmental coordination 129w
Government grants to local authorities, Housing insulation 44-6w
Poultry meat, Plymouth 420-1w
Spectacles, Prices 475w
Student loans 415-6w

Spencer, Mr Derek
Questions
British Leyland 291
Community programme, Leicester 398w
Local government expenditure 461w
Police authorities, Manpower 214w

Spicer, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Water pollution, Norman Shaw building (06.06.85) 452-3

Spicer, Mr Michael, *Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
Air fares 621
Air fares, Western Europe 621
Air routes, Australia 197w
Air routes, Northern Ireland 530w
Air routes, Philippine Airlines 196w
Air transport competition 621-2
Air travel, Heathrow 266w
Airlines, Manchester Airport 529w
Airlines, EC action 157w
Airlines, Heathrow 266w
British Airports Authority, Privatisation 413w
Buses, Greater London 627
Car hire, Greater London 375w
Construction, Heathrow 266w
Crop spraying, Safety measures 380w
Express coach services 626-8
Express coach services, Safety 628
Heathrow 583w
Landing rights, Far East 196w

Landing rights, Judgments 196w
Landing rights, Philippine Airlines 196w
Motor insurance, EC law 412-3w
Road tax, Sub post offices 531-2w

Sponsorship
Trade missions 565-8w

Sports
Animal cruelty 304w
South Africa 460w

Sports Council 875-6

Sports facilities
Prisons 382w

Sportsgrounds
Fire prevention 430
Football 428-30
Public order policing 212w
Safety 429-30, 462-3w

Springfields
Radioactive wastes 410w

Springsteen, Bruce 740

Squire, Mr Robin
Questions
Defence, Labour Party 753-4
International Year of Disabled People 97w
International Year of the Child, Government grants 29w
Youth training scheme, Confederation of British Industry 400w

Sri Lanka
British embassies 220-1w
Civil disorder 221-2w
Entry clearances 216w, 221w
Hydroelectric power 391w
Immigrants 155w
Immigration 493w
Immigration applications 215w
Ministerial statements (03.06.85) 52-9
Overseas aid 407w
Political refugees 215-6w
Tamils 282-3w, 302-3w, 443w

St Barnabas Community Centre 463-4w

St Nicholas Hospital 285w
Plumstead 285w

St Pancras to Sheffield railway line 371w

St Pauls Community Association 463w

St Stephens Entrance 21w
Pedestrian crossings 21w

Staff-student ratios
Further education 165w

Stafford Prison 494w
Prison accommodation 494w
Sanitation 494w

Stainmore
Armed forces training 503w
Land acquisition 258w, 503w

Stanbrook, Mr Ivor
Debates etc
Oral question time point of order (12.06.85) 881
Questions
Business statement 445
Dikko, Umaru, Political refugees 208w
Hong Kong, Civil service pensions 408w
Immigration rules, European Court of Human Rights 427-8
Judiciary, Northern Ireland 1001
Rent control, Private rented housing 885

Standard Telephones & Cables
Northern Ireland 999-1000

Standards specifications
Riding hats 15w

Standing Committee on Crime Prevention 492w

Standing Order No. 6 (06.06.85) 460-96

Standing Order No 10 applications
Arts finance (06.06.85) 458-9
Coal mine closures (13.06.85) 1033-4
Immigration rules (03.06.85) 60-1
Speakers rulings & statements (13.06.85) 1035

Stanley, Rt Hon John, *Minister of State for the Armed Forces*
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (13.06.85) 1101-8
Questions
Armed forces 147
Armed forces, Resignations 146-7
Armed forces local overseas allowance 146
Armed forces strength 149w
Armed forces visits, Chile 423-3w
Chemical weapons 61w, 148-9
Chemical weapons, Arms control treaties 148
Chemical weapons, Defence equipment 148
Chemical weapons, USA 502w
Chemical weapons, USSR 147-8
Chemical weapons, Warsaw Pact 502w
Cruise missile sites, Safety 147w
Defence, Europe 148w
Defence arms control unit 138-9, 147w
Exercise Brave Defender 424w
Falkland Islands 140-2
Falkland Islands, Airports 141
Falkland Islands, Defence expenditure 140-1
Falkland Islands, Ministers visits abroad 144w
General Belgrano 145w
Military exercises, Warsaw Pact 147w
Ministry of Defence, Crisis management 143w
NATO, Defence expenditure 466-8w
NATO ministerial meetings 148w
Navy, Resignations 147
Nuclear artillery shells 142-3
Nuclear demolition mines, USA 148w
Nuclear war 142
Nuclear weapons, Transport 146w
Nuclear weapons deployment 148-9w

Stansted Airport (05.06.85) 307-29

State earnings related pension scheme 750-1, 1008-9
Costs 431w
Earnings related supplement 240-1w, 591w
Pensioners 241w
Social security reviews 431w

State occupational pensions 104w

"State of the Region Report, 1984" 458w

State veterinary service 445w

State visits
Mexico 752-3

"Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1985" (12.06.85) 895-984, (13.06.85) 1035-115

Steel, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
Elderly (06.06.85) 460-5, 491
Questions
Agricultural machinery, Scotland 445w
Agricultural services, Scotland 445w
Sheltered housing, Rate rebates 150-1
Thatcher, Margaret 749
Veterinary investigation service 518w
Veterinary services, Scotland 445w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 319
Elderly (06.06.85) 484-7, 492
Questions
Air transport, Western Europe 622-3
A38, Road safety barriers 530w
Devon Ray 90-1w
Employment schemes, Expenditure 122w
Road safety barriers 4w

Stevens, Mr Lewis
Debates etc
Wages councils (06.06.85) 520-2

Stewart, Mr Allan, *Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Debates etc
Higher education (04.06.85) 226
Questions
Community programme, Dundee 415w
Educational finance, Scotland 447-8w
Metallic marker pens, Scotland 445w
School leaving, Scotland 571-2w
School leaving certificates, Scotland 572w
Scottish Development Agency, Holidays 571w
Teacher training, Scotland 534w
Teachers, Scotland 349w
Unemployment, Scotland 135-6w
Youth training scheme, Fife 415w
Youth unemployment, Scotland 136w

Stewart, Mr Andy
Debates etc
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 268-9
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1028
Questions
Nuclear power stations 4
Small businesses, Industrial finance 176w

Stewart, Rt Hon Donald
Debates etc
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 76, 82, 83, 109
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 355, 359
Social security (03.06.85) 46
Questions
Aberdeen University, Student grants 446-7w
Forests, Scotland 349w
Hydrography, Western Isles 467w
Nuclear power stations, Dounreay 11-2

Stewart, Mr Ian, *Economic Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
Bank of England, Redundancy 440-1w
Building societies 248-50w
Building Societies Association, Ministerial speeches 264w
EC budget 65w
EC Budget Council 65-6w
EC grants & loans, Export subsidies 293-4w
European Commission, Expenditure 499w
European Commission, Manpower 499w
Exchange rates 68w

Stockport
House renovation grants 563w

Stokes, Mr John
Debates etc
Sri Lanka, Political refugees (03.06.85) 59
Questions
Armed forces 147
Business statement 444, 1015-6

STOLport
Aircraft noise 269w
Sound insulation 269w

Stonehenge 269w
Public order offences 560w
Public order policing 281w, 303w

Stott, Mr Roger
Questions
Express coach services 627-8
Lorries, Safety 631

Stradling Thomas, Mr John, *Minister of State for Wales*
Debates etc
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 167-73
Questions
Cardigan bypass 92w
Development Board for Rural Wales, Finance 92w
Forestry grants, Blaen-y-Cwm 168w
Metallic marker pens, Wales 556-7w
Motorways, Wales 557w
Tree felling, Wales 199w
Tree planting 198-9w

Strang, Mr Gavin
Debates etc
Arms control treaties (07.06.85) 613-5
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 951-4
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 337-8, 348
Questions

British Leyland 290-1
Employment level 395-6w

Strategic defence initiative
Export controls 451w
USA 147w

"Strategy for Agricultural Research & Development" 445w

Straw, Mr Jack
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 549-50
Higher education (04.06.85) 211
Matthew Brown, Public petitions (07.06.85) 600-1
Rolls-Royce, Press releases (04.06.85) 155
Transport Bill 1984/85, Public petitions (07.06.85) 601
Water pollution, Norman Shaw building (06.06.85) 450-1
Questions
Bus services, Privatisation 369-70w
Employment level 393w
Rent control, Private rented housing 886

Stray dogs 389w

Strike ballots
Trade unions 739-40

"Strip Searches : the Facts" 153w

Structure plans
Berkshire 457w

Student grants 126w, 335-6w
Aberdeen University 446-7w
Costs 165-6w
Northern Ireland 137-8w

Student loans 415-6w

Student numbers 23-6w
EC countries 25-6w
Higher education 31w
Higher education admission 572w
Overseas students 24w
Polytechnics 218w
Postgraduate students 26-8w
Science education 334-6w
Universities 27-9w, 570w

Students
Housing benefits 364w
Speech therapists 183w
Supplementary benefits 364w

Sub judice
NHS complaints 433w

Sub post offices
Road tax 531-2w

Subsidence
Coal mining 409w
Compensation 409w

Subsidies
Brewing industry 131w

Successor authorities 514-5w
Public appointments 515w

Sudan
Food aid 436w

Suffolk
Family practitioner committees 93-4w

Sugar
Food labelling 579w

Sugar beet
EC action 420w
Import controls 420w
Rhizomania 420w

Suicide
Friarton Young Offenders Institution 349-50w

Sulphur dioxide 314w, 318w, 457w
Air pollution 314w, 457w
Oil refineries 314w

Sumberg, Mr David
Debates etc
Legal Profession Reform, Motion to introduce Bill negatived (11.06.85) 757-8
Questions
Confectionery, USA 131-2w
Parliamentary constituencies, City of Manchester 457-8w
USSR, Political prisoners 301w
Wallenberg, Raoul 272w, 309w

Supplementary Benefit (Requirements & Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions Regulations 1985 363-4w, 544-7w

Supplementary benefits 228w, 478-9w
Administrative costs 364w
Board & lodging charges 363-4w, 492w, 546-7w, 584w
Budget 287-8w
Cumbernauld 235w
Exceptional circumstances additions 235w
Exceptional needs payments 478w
Islington 101w
Lambeth 585-6w
Nursing homes 544-5w
Part-time employment 551w
Pensioners 235w
Residential care 544-5w
Social security recipients 287w, 363-4w
Social security reviews 287-8w, 551-2w
Students 364w
Unemployed 286-7w
Young people 425w
Youth training scheme 362w, 365-6w
Youth unemployment 362w

Supplementary benefits disregards of income 588-9w

Supplementary questions
Speakers rulings & statements (03.06.85) 6, 8, (10.06.85) 621, 629, (12.06.85) 881, 887

Supply Estimates
Coastal protection 151w
Northern Ireland (05.06.85) 382-413

Support for innovation scheme 174-5w
East Midlands 174-5w

Surgery
Infectious diseases 549w

Surrogacy Arrangements Bill 1984/85 478w

Surrogate agencies 478w

Surrogate mothers 478w

Sussex
Drug abuse 592w

Sutcliffe, Peter 547w, 587w
Prison discipline 587w

Swann Committee see Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups Committee of Inquiry

SWAPO 76w, 170w
UN High Commissioner for Refugees 170w

Swindon
British Rail Engineering 621

Syon Abbey 530w

Syrian Arab Republic
Embassies 385w, 488-9w

System building
Building repairs 881-2

Takeovers
House of Fraser 189w, 569w
Manchester Steel 14w
Matthew Brown (07.06.85) 600-1

Talbot UK 290

Tameside
Employment level 353w

Tamils 221-2w
Amnesty International 282w
Entry clearances 283w
Immigrants sponsors 154-5w
India 443w
Political refugees 302-3w, 423-4, 431-2
Sri Lanka 282-3w, 302-3w, 443w
Temporary immigrants 443w

Tate, John 296w, 302w
Incest 296w

Tax allowances
Small businesses 112-3w
Tree planting 65w, 69w

Tax collection offices 112w

Tax credits
Wind power 5

Tax harmonisation
EC action 113w

Tax reform
Small businesses 173w

Tax thresholds
VAT 393w

Tax yields
Building industry 501w
Imports 263w

Taylor, Arthur 317w

Taylor, Godfrey 159-61w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Questions
Bankruptcy, Northern Ireland 82w
Employment level, Northern Ireland 368w
Europassport, Gibraltar 170w
Hyster 83w
Primary education, Ballyhalbert 153w
Public sector housing, Northern Ireland 539w

Taylor, Mr John Mark
Questions
Capital transfer tax, Ancient woodlands 561-2w
Coal mining, Solihull 877
Council house sales, Northern Ireland 534-5w
Defence contracts, NATO 148w
Family doctors, Pay 364w
Public sector housing sales, Northern Irelnad 1005
Refuse disposal, Privatisation 458w
Regional aid, West Midlands 289-90

Taylor, Mr Teddy
Debates etc
War pensions (13.06.85) 1116-7, 1120
Questions
Abortion, Hospital beds 588w
Agricultural surpluses, EC external trade 518-9w
Civil servants, Re-employment 502w
Civil service unions 17
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 12
Customs & Excise, Computer staff 249-50w
Customs & Excise, Computers in government departments 251w
EC budget 388w
EC grants & loans, Export subsidies 293-4w
Employment schemes 402w
European Commission, EC budget 513w
European Commission, Expenditure 499w
European Commission, Manpower 499w
European Commission, Redundancy pay 536w
Intervention Board, Export subsidies 292-3w
Intervention stocks 292w
Intervention stocks, Cereals 292w
Kuala Lumpur, Air routes 301-2w
Manufactured exports 392w
Manufactured goods, Balance of trade 298
Nicaragua 193w
Nicaragua, Bananas 222w
Nicaragua, EC external relations 222w
Non-domestic rates 295
Nuclear power stations, Safety 11
Product liability, EC action 261-2w
Water pollution, Nitrates 890

Teacher training 164w
Church schools 509w
Educational qualifications 163w
Ethnic minorities 164w
Plymouth 509w
Polytechnic of North London 163w
Primary education 569w
Rudolf Steiner schools 465-6w
Scotland 534w

Special education 505w

Teachers
Deaf 163w
Educational exchanges 164-5w
Industrial disputes 349w
Members correspondence 30w
Scotland 349w
Special schools 505w
Trade union membership 165w
Trade unions 330w

Teachers Superannuation Working Party 329-30w
Public appointments 329w

"Teaching Quality White Paper" 465-6w

Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
Debates etc
Rolls-Royce, Press releases (05.06.85) 306
Questions
Bosphorus bridge 299-300
British Leyland 290-2
British Leyland, Investment 295-6
Business in the Community, Government grants 288
Industry, Privatisation 172w
Local enterprise agencies 289
Local enterprise agencies, Coal closure areas 288-9
Small firms service 289

Technical education
Higher education 127-8w

Technicians
NHS 360w

Technology transfer
COCOM 451w
Defence 565w
Export controls 451-2w
USA 565w

Telephone charges
Pensioners (12.06.85) 893-5

Telephone systems
Motorway service areas 375w

Television
Press briefings 302w

Television licences
Licensing 211w

Television programmes
Deaf 210w

Temporary employment 521w

Temporary immigrants 213w, 423-4
Immigration controls 154-5w
Tamils 443w

Tenants exchange scheme 314w
Costs 314w

Tenders 374w, 481-6w
Channel crossing 374w

Terlezki, Mr Stefan
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 579
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 915
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 29
Questions
Civil defence, Defence research 209w
Trident, Employment opportunities 146w

Terrace pavilion 407w
House of Commons catering 407w

Territorial waters
Norway 275w

Terrorism 206w
Arrests 22w
Killeen 247w
Northern Ireland 151-2w, 248w, 469-72w
Republic of Ireland 260w

Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts 151-2w

Testing
Air safety 150w
Drugs 95-6w, 102w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 246w
Water cannon 19-20w

Textile industry
European Regional Development Fund 564w

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service
Debates etc
Football hooliganism, Ministerial statements (03.06.85) 21-33
Questions
Africa, Food aid 436-7
Alzheimers Disease Society 5w
Average earnings 301w
Banks, Tony 437
Bradford City Football Club, Fires 153-4
China, Prime Minister 435w
Computers in government departments, Personal records 5-6w
Cooklin, Shirley, Ministers correspondence 562w
Council house sales 511w
Crime prevention, Departmental coordination 300w
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 438
Cruise missiles, Military exercises 562w
Dairy farming, Northern Ireland 1009-10
Defence, Labour Party 753-4
Dooge Report 434-5
Drug crimes 1007
EC budget 299w, 388w
Employment opportunities 1009
Energy conservation, Departmental coordination 129w
European Commission, EC budget 513w
European Court of Human Rights 435w, 749
Falkland Islands, Fisheries 388w
Federation of Conservative Students 752
Football hooliganism 152, 436, 438-40
Football hooliganism, Government grants 129w
General Belgrano 1008-9
Government Communications Headquarters, Privatisation 511w
Graduates 128w
Grenada, Prime Minister 5w
Health service staff, Pay 6w
Hospitals, Management 563w
Industry, Educational finance 167w
International Find a Child Organisation, Government assistance 302w
Israel, UN resolutions 149-50
Jordan, Official visits 389w
Kuala Lumpur, Air routes 301-2w
Liverpool Football Club 300-1w
Local authorities, Contracts 438
Local government reform, Greater London Council 437
McGuigan, Barry 750
Metropolitan Police, Pay 1008
Mexico, State visits 752-3
Middle East, Peace negotiations 750
Midwives, Pay 300w
Milk, Production quotas 6w
Minimum wage 149
Nicaragua 193w
Nurses, Pay 5w, 153, 436
Pay review bodies, Pay 512w
Pearce, Idris 513w
Portsmouth & South East Hampshire Health Authority, Privatisation 300w
Press briefings, Television 302w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Gainsborough 128w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Lambeth 128-9w
Prime Minister official engagements 129w, 193w, 389w, 511-2w
Prime Minister official engagements, Shamir, Yitzhak 193w
Rates & rating 151
Retirement pensions 152
Share ownership, Owner occupied housing 1010
Sheltered housing, Rate rebates 150-1
Social security, Leader of the Opposition 150
Social security reviews 150-3, 435-8, 1007-8
Social security reviews, Housing benefits 151
South Africa, Overseas trade 436
State earnings related pension scheme 750-1, 1008-9
Thatcher, Margaret 749
Top Salaries Review Body 190-2w
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85 752
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85, Private Members motions 437-8
USSR, Jews 388w
USSR, Political prisoners 301w
Wakeham, John, Marriage 436
Weedkillers, Abortion 1010

Thatcher, Margaret 749

Thomas, Mr D E
Debates etc
Ambulance services, Public petitions (07.06.85) 603
Overseas aid (11.06.85) 793-5
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 190-3
Wages councils (06.06.85) 520
Questions
Atomic Energy Authority constabulary 193w
Defence arms control unit 138
Exercise Brave Defender 424w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, International conferences 308-9w
Nuclear safeguards 24w
Nuclear safeguards, Nuclear reactors 295w
Plutonium, Disclosure of information 295w
Plutonium, Members correspondence 571w
Plutonium, Production 295w
Police national reporting centre 20w
RAF Caerwent 63-4w

Thomas, Dr Roger
Debates etc
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 183
Questions
Benzodiazepines, Drug abuse 226w
Chorionic villus sampling, Clinical trials 239-40w
Family doctors, Part-time employment 224w
Family doctors, Rural areas 225w
Fertility, Clinics 284w
Junior hospital doctors, Employment opportunities 224w
Legionnaires disease, Medical research 240w
Limited list prescribing 139-40w
Medical Research Council, Government grants 238-9w
Orthopaedics, Hospital waiting lists 167w
Pesticides, Dioxin 289-90w
Savage, Wendy 224-5w
Tinnitus, Wales 168w
Tinnitus maskers 225w
Tinnitus maskers, Scotland 251w
2 4 5-T, Imports 261w
2 4 5-T, Pesticides 261w

Thompson, Mr Jack
Debates etc
Coal Industry Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.85) 256, 257-8
Questions
Northern region, Economic situation 458w
Unemployment 394w

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Higher education (04.06.85) 221
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1127, 1160, 1183, 1185, 1190
Young people (11.06.85) 831-4
Questions
Civil defence, Defence research 209w
Research councils, Public expenditure 510w
Small businesses, Advisory services 177w

Thorne, Mr Neil
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (13.06.85) 1072-4
Questions
Civil defence, Departmental publications 283-4w

Thorne, Mr Stan
Questions
European fighter aircraft 146w
Hospital consultants, Home visits 360w

Thornton, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 325

Thorp Arch Prisons 385-6w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1150, 1163, 1184, 1188
Wages councils (06.06.85) 505, 507, 513-6, 530
Questions
Council house sales, Bolton 887
Defence procurement 149
Housing corporation, Corporate plans 516w
Local Enterprise Week, Small businesses 175w

Tilhill Forestry 166w

Tillingham Hall 628

Tinnitus
Hospital consultants 168w
Wales 168w

Tinnitus maskers 225w, 251w
Scotland 251w

Tinsley Park 176w
Factory closures 176w

Tobacco 232-3w

Tobacco industry
Redundancy 452w
Unfair competition 452w

Top Salaries Review Body 190-2w

Torness Power Station 4

Torney, Mr Thomas
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 550
Questions
Bus services, Privatisation 370w
Sportsgrounds, Fire prevention 430

Tourism
Council of Ministers 12w
Gibraltar 297w
Merseyside 302

Tourist industry 301-2
Regional planning & development 301

Tower Hamlets
Public sector housing (07.06.85) 591
Rate support grants (07.06.85) 591

Townend, Mr John
Questions
European Court of Human Rights 749
Wages councils 745-6

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (13.06.85) 1086-8
Questions
Council of Ministers 78-9w
Falkland Islands 140
Zimbabwe, British citizenship 136-7w

Toys & games
Hazardous materials 450w

Tracey, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Higher education (04.06.85) 237
Questions
Private Bills, Small businesses 441w
Retirement pensions 152

Trade fairs
British Overseas Trade Board 454w

Trade missions 565-8w
South Africa 565-8w
Sponsorship 565-8w

Trade Union Act 1984 57w, 402-3w

Trade union elections 57w, 401w, 739
Trade union officials 402-3w
Transport & General Workers Union 2w, 19w
Voting methods 401w

Trade union membership
Teachers 165w

Trade union officials
Trade union elections 402-3w

Trade unions
British Rail Engineering 371w
Gifts & endowments 740
Political levy 398-9w, 739-41
Secret ballot 574-8w
Strike ballots 739-40
Teachers 330w
Voting methods 401-2w
Wages councils 399w

Trafalgar Square 216w
Demonstrations 216w

Traffic censuses 541-2w

Training
Apprentices 503w
Small businesses 177w

Training aircraft 62-4w, 304w, 305w
Defence contracts 62-3w, 64w
Defence procurement 304w

Tranquillisers 226w

Transitional costs 515w
Greater London Council 515w
Local government reform 515w

Transport
Nuclear weapons 146w

Transport Bill 1984/85 (07.06.85) 601
Public petitions (07.06.85) 601

Transport of hazardous materials
Ruthenium 376w
Safety standards 376w

Transport of radioactive materials
Nuclear fuels 2w

Transport subsidies
Northern Ireland 426w

Transport & General Workers Union 2w, 19w
Trade union elections 2w, 19w

Travel agents
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 262-3w

Travel restrictions
Offenders 304w

Travelling expenses
Civil service 67w
One parent families 551w

Treasury
Central-local government relations 392w
House of Commons questions 66w
Members correspondence 293w

Treaties
Extradition 441-2w
Sex discrimination 272w

Treaty of Rome 90w

Tree felling
Agricultural land 444w
Licensing 219w, 251-2w, 444w, 446w
Prosecutions 252w
Wales 199w

Tree planting 166w, 198-9w, 219w, 251-2w
Cost benefit analysis 263w
Forestry grants 166w
Scotland 349w
Tax allowances 65w, 69w

Trees 458w
Acid rain 532-3w
Air pollution 350w

Trent Regional Health Authority 587w

Trial areas 370w

Trials 634
Khan, Parvaiz 382w
Newham seven 498-9w
Northern Ireland 1000-1
Official secrets 751

Tribunals
Racial discrimination 435w

Tributyl tin 578-9w

Trident 146w
Costs 305w
Employment opportunities 146w

Trident missiles
Casualties 146-7w
Nuclear weapons tests 467w

"Triple Jeopardy" 586w

Trippier, Mr David, Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
Debates etc
Sanitaryware, Belgium (10.06.85) 732-4, 736
Questions
Aerospace industry 177w
Asbestos, Import controls 326-7w
Asbestos, Imports 326w
"Burdens on Business" 390w
Clothing industry, Employment 390w
Company management, Airbus Industrie 176w
Exhibitions, Industry & Parliament Trust 261w
Government assistance to industry, North West region 174w
Government assistance to industry, Northern region 297-8
Industrial research, Regional planning & development 173w
International Tropical Timber Organisation 324-6w
Local enterprise agencies 180w
Local enterprise boards 296
Local Enterprise Week 175w, 180w
Local Enterprise Week, Small businesses 175w
Local government aid to industry 296
New businesses, Northern region 568-9w
Post office closures 285-7
Post office closures, Shrewsbury 286
Post Office Users Council, Postal deliveries 565w
Recycling 175w
Shipbuilding, Regional aid 453w
Small businesses, Advisory services 177w
Small businesses, Data banks 175w
Small businesses, Government contracts 296-7
Small businesses, Industrial finance 176w
Small businesses, Secondary education 173w
Small businesses, Tax reform 173w
Small firms service 133w
Small industrial workshops 327-8w
Tobacco industry, Redundancy 452w
2 4 5-T, Pesticides 261w
Unfair competition, Tobacco industry 452w

Tropical Development & Research Institute 636-8

Trotter, Mr Neville
Questions
Monopolies & Mergers Commission, Association of British Travel Agents 262-3w

Tucano aircraft 62-4w, 304-5w
Defence contracts 305w
Prices 304w

Tumble driers 17w

Turkey
Foreign relations 136w

Turnover taxes 113w

Turtle products 201-2w
Cayman Islands 201-2w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Crime prevention, Departmental coordination 300w

Crime prevention, Lighting 492w

2 4 5-T 261w, 1010
Exports 261w
Imports 261w
Pesticides 261w

Type 23 frigates 145w

Ulster Defence Regiment 143-4
Crime 143

Ulster Special Constabulary 472w

UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 270-1w

UN General Assembly
Kampuchea 488w

UN High Commissioner for Refugees 77w, 170w
SWAPO 170w

UN resolutions 487w
Israel 149-50
Nuclear non proliferation 487w
Palestine Liberation Organisation 307w

Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85 14-5, (07.06.85) 594-5, 595-7, 599-600, 602-5, 608-11, 752
Order for further consideration read (07.06.85) 612
Private Members motions 437-8, (07.06.85) 608-11
Public petitions (07.06.85) 594-5, 595-7, 599-600, 602-5

Underground railways
Fires 629

Unemployed
Death 360w
Social security benefits disqualification 427w
Supplementary benefits 286-7w

Unemployment 121-2w, 189w, 354-5w, 393-6w, 577-8w, 742-4
Derbyshire 353-4w
EC countries 170-2w
Health 359w
Inner city partnerships 59w
Lambeth 395w
Merseyside 403w
Newham 522w
Northern Ireland 537w
Older workers 395w
Portsmouth 577w
Rates & rating 410w
Rochdale 199w
Scotland 135-6w
Skilled workers 293-4
Statistics 741-2

Unemployment benefits 427w
Dismissal 405w
Newham 236w
Southwark 106w

"Unemployment Health & Social Policy" 359w

UNESCO 298w

Unfair competition
Brewing industry 452w
Ceramic industries (10.06.85) 730-6
Tobacco industry 452w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Cleaning services 3

United Nations
Overseas aid 298w
Women 272w

Universities
Student numbers 27-9w, 570w

University Grants Committee
Manpower 509w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speakers rulings & statements (13.06.85) 1009

Unsolicited Newspapers (Limitation of Delivery) Bill 1984/85
2R order read (07.06.85) 612

Upper Waiting Hall
Open Tech 520w

Uranium
Foreign trade 408-9w

Urban deprivation 204w

Urban programme 48w, 459w
Community centres 463-4w
Expenditure 517-8w
Finance 32-3w
Government grants to local authorities 312w
Local government expenditure 459w
London boroughs 312w
Newham (03.06.85) 127-36

USA
Banks 488w
Chemical weapons 305w, 502w
Confectionery 131-2w
Conferences 416w
Economic sanctions 222w, 408w
Educational exchanges 164-5w
Export controls 407-8w, 451-2w
Foreign trade 488w
Grenades 168-9w
Minimum wage 745-6
Nuclear demolition mines 148w
Strategic defence initiative 147w
Technology transfer 565w

USSR
Chemical weapons 147-8, 305w
Hot line 137w
Jews 388w
Political prisoners 272w, 301w, 309w

Vacancies 113-21w, 742
Apprentices 293
Occupational therapists 431w
Police 209w
School teachers 569w
Skillcentres 578w

Vaccination
Legionnaires disease 240w
Poliomyelitis 183w
Publicity 427w
Rubella 427w

Vagrancy 492w

Vagrancy Acts 492w

Valuation (Deductions from Gross Annual Value) (Scotland) Order 1984 414-5w

Value added network services 190w
Licensing 190w

Value Added Tax (Hiring of Goods) Order 1985 (10.06.85) 639

van Straubenzee, Sir William
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 1-2
Falkland Islands, Airports 141
House of Commons questions, Church Commissioners 1-2w
National Bus Company, Pensions 371-2w
Shop hours 207w
Structure plans, Berkshire 457w
Wages councils, Youth employment 399w

VAT
Administrative costs 294w
Debts 499w
EC external trade 501w
Imports 263w, 500-1w
Tax thresholds 393w

VAT registration
Building industry 500w
Punishment 500w

VAT threshold
Building industry 500w
Small businesses 500-1w

Vehicles
Ethiopia 636

Veterinary investigation centres 445w

Veterinary investigation service 518w

Veterinary services
Inquiries 350-1w
Northern Ireland 468w
Scotland 350-1w, 445w

Victims Against Terrorism 408w

Video recordings
Censorship 381-2w

Video Recordings Act 1984 381-2w

Viggers, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 918, 948-50
Questions
British Rail, Procurement 624-5
Employment opportunities 1009
Light dues 531w
William of Orange, Anniversaries 490w

Viruses
Barley 30w

Vocational education
Curriculum 416-7w

Vocational guidance
School leaving 57-8w

Voluntary organisations
Energy conservation 22w
Local government reform 34w

Voluntary services unit 46-8w, 208w
Government grants 208w

Voting methods
Trade union elections 401w
Trade unions 401-2w

Waddington, Mr David, Minister of State for the Home Department
Debates etc
Immigration controls (14.06.85) 1197-1200
Questions
Data Protection Act 1984, Local government 442w
Detention centres 434
Dikko, Umaru, Political refugees 208w
Entry clearances, Codes of practice 206w
Entry clearances, Indian subcontinent 213w
Entry clearances, Sri Lanka 216w
Immigrants, Sri Lanka 155w
Immigrants sponsors, Tamils 154-5w
Immigration, Sri Lanka 493w
Immigration, Waiting lists 443w
Immigration applications, Sri Lanka 215w
Immigration controls 21-2w
Immigration controls, Airline staff 205w
Immigration controls, Civil servants 208w
Immigration controls, EC countries 442-3w
Immigration controls, Political refugees 303w
Immigration rules, European Court of Human Rights 427-8
Immigration rules, Sex discrimination 426-8
Offenders, Travel restrictions 304w
Police records, Disclosure of information 207w
Political refugees, Sri Lanka 215-6w
Prevention of Terrorism Acts 206w
Tamils, Amnesty International 282w
Tamils, Entry clearances 283w
Tamils, Political refugees 302-3w
Tamils, Sri Lanka 282-3w, 443w
Tamils, Temporary immigrants 443w
Temporary immigrants 213w, 423-4

Wages councils 149, 399w, 745-6
Opposition days (06.06.85) 497-536
Part-time employment 747-8
Prosecutions 402w
Retail trade 400w
Statistics 745-6
Trade unions 399w
Young people 402w
Youth employment 399w, 746

"Wages Councils Consultation Paper" 353w

Wages inspectorate 404w

Wainwright, Mr Richard
Questions
Customs & Excise, Confiscated goods 69-70w
Land drilling, Petroleum 876-7
Prison medical services, Complaints 209w

Trade union elections, Voting methods 401w
Youth training scheme 56-7w

Waiting lists
Crown courts 255-6w
Driving tests 581-2w
Immigration 443w

Wakefield Prison (14.06.85) 1123
Public petitions (14.06.85) 1123

Wakeham, John
Marriage 436

Wakeham, W 90-1w

Waldegrave, Mr William, *Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Questions
Acid rain, Power stations 318w
Air pollution, Exhaust emissions 314w
Air pollution, Fossil fuels 313w
Air pollution, Sulphur dioxide 457w
Antifouling paints, Sailing boats 457w
Arts, Government grants 169w
Arts sponsorship 7-8w
Asbestos, Waste disposal 879-81
Block grant 412w
Castle Howard, Art works 501-2w
Control of Pollution (Territorial Sea) (Revocation) Regulations 1985 202-3w
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 43-4w
Countryside Commission, Finance 886-7
Dolphins 203w
Domestic rates 266w
Domestic rates, Waltham Forest 315w
European Regional Development Fund, Textile industry 564w
Forests 54-5w
Forests, Sites of special scientific interest 55w
Greater London Council 514w
Greater London Council, Computers 515w
Greater London Council, Debts 411-2w
Hazardous Waste Inspectorate 269w, 516w
Hazardous wastes 516w
House of Commons questions, Office of Arts & Libraries 6-7w
Local government reform 53-4w, 564w
Local government reform, Arts finance 357w
Local government reform, Block grant 564w
Local government reform, Civil service manpower 34w
Local government reform, Costs 515w
Local government reform, Councillors 514w
Local government reform, Disclosure of information 515w
Local government reform, Greater London Council 317w, 352w, 411w
Local government reform, Redundancy 352w
Natural radioactivity 268w
Nature conservation, Poultry 412w
Nitrogen oxides, Oil refineries 313w
Nuclear power stations, Pollution monitoring 269w
Nuclear power stations, Power station closures 462w
Ordnance Survey, Income 315w
Parliamentary constituencies, City of Manchester 457-8w
Pollution control, Hazardous wastes 49w
Radioactive waste disposal 311-2w, 462w
Radioactive waste disposal, Public inquiries 202w
Radioactive wastes, Magnox reactors 38w
Radioactive wastes, Nuclear power stations 39w
Radioactive wastes, Springfields 410w
Rag flock 463w
Rate demands 323w
Rate limitation, London boroughs 515w
Rates & rating, Unemployment 410w
Rights of way, Cumbria 410w
Royal Festival Hall 43w
Sewers, Rate support grants 318w
Sites of special scientific interest 316w, 460w
Successor authorities 515w
Successor authorities, Public appointments 515w
Sulphur dioxide, Oil refineries 314w
Trees 458w
Turtle products 202w
Turtle products, Cayman Islands 201-2w
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Public footpaths 456w

Wales
Agricultural workers 557-8w
Attendance allowance 477w
Bypasses 92w
Coal mining 449w
Community nurses 264-5w
Dairy farming 557w
Dental technicians 389w
Forests 199w
Government assistance to industry 92w
Hospital waiting lists 167w
Industrial development 92w
Intervention stocks 130-1w
Local government social services 557w
Metallic marker pens 556-7w
Milk 93w
Mobility allowance 477w
Motorways 557w
NHS 198w
Opposition days (04.06.85) 162-205
Radioactive waste disposal 198w
Rate support grants 264w
Regional planning & development 558w
Rural areas (04.06.85) 162-205
Sheep scab 557w
Sheep worrying 91w
Tinnitus 168w
Tree felling 199w
Welfare rights officers 557w

Walker, Mr A Cecil
Debates etc
Historic Churches (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (11.06.85) 861-2
Questions
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 536w, 1004
Fraud, Northern Ireland Housing Executive 436w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 469-70w
Smith, Gary 470w

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 315
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 970-3
Falkland Islands, Members visits abroad (05.06.85) 330
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 93
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 338, 339, 364-5
Questions
Civil defence, Defence research 209w
Scottish Development Agency, Holidays 571w

Walker, Rt Hon Peter, *Secretary of State for Energy*
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 1-4
Coal mining 22-3w
Coal mining, Dismissal 8, 12-13
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 7-10, 12-3
Coal mining, Industrial relations 13
Coal mining, Redundancy 9
House of Commons questions, Dept of Energy 23-4w
Management consultants, Dept of Energy 23w
National Coal Board 7-8
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Cleaning services 3

Wall, Sir Patrick
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 915, 916, 931-4, (13.06.85) 1038

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc
EC Agricultural Council (13.06.85) 1027
Family Law (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep & 3R (03.06.85) 120
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R, (03.06.85) 65, 87-90
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 1-2
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Orkney 11
Reform of Social Security consultation paper, Rate rebates 362w

Wallenberg, Raoul 272w, 301w, 309w

Waller, Mr Gary
Questions
Business statement 446-7
Civil defence, Defence research 209w
Leeds Prison, Prison overcrowding 153-4w
Rag flock 463w
Road safety 372w
Sportsgrounds, Safety 429

Waltham Forest
Domestic rates 315w
House renovation grants 878
Road construction (07.06.85) 598-9

Wandsworth
Secondary education 257w

War pensions (13.06.85) 1116-22

Warcop
Land acquisition 257-8w

Ward, Mr John
Debates etc
Property development, Dorset (12.06.85) 988-9
Questions
Land drilling, Petroleum 877
M3, Road safety 630-1

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Debates etc
Rural Areas, Wales (04.06.85) 173
Young people (11.06.85) 834-7
Questions
Land drilling, Petroleum 877
Minimum wage 149

Wardle, Mr Charles
Questions
Household surveys 412w

Wareing, Robert N
Debates etc
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 561
Social security (03.06.85) 48
Questions
Defence, Europe 148w
Diabetes, Disposable syringes 365w
Diabetes, Food labelling 291-2w
Diabetes, Health Service Staff 365w
Drugs, Benzodiazepines 283w
Gas supply industry, Northern Ireland 426w
Paramedical staff, Pay settlements 434w
Prison population, National Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders 205-6w
Social security reviews, Occupational pensions 431w
Supplementary benefits, Exceptional circumstances additions 235w
Unemployment, Merseyside 403w

Warren, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc
Football hooliganism, European Cup Final (03.06.85) 31
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1142-5

Warsaw Pact
Chemical weapons 502w
Explosives 64w
Military exercises 147w

Warships
Defence contracts 503w
Privatisation 173w
Shipbuilding 452-3w, 503w

Warwickshire
Intervention stocks 90w

Washing machines 17w

Waste disposal
Asbestos 879-81
Hazardous wastes 162-3w, 269w

Water
Electricity generation 275-6w

Water authorities
Fees & charges 312-3w
Privatisation 455-6w
Water pollution 314-6w

Water Authorities Consumer Consultative Committees 461w

Water cannon 19-20w
Police equipment 20w
Testing 19-20w

Water charges 312-3w
Social security recipients 238w

Water pollution
Fertilisers 890
Nitrates 890
Norman Shaw building (05.06.85) 374-5, 411w, (06.06.85) 449-56
Water authorities 314-6w

Water supply
Aluminium 314-6w
Households 310w
Ministerial statements (06.06.85) 449-56
Norman Shaw building 411w, 513w

Water supply industry 461w

Water treatment
Caugh Hill 540w
Northern Ireland 540w

Watson, Mr John
Questions
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 162-3w

Watts, Mr John
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 3-4
Immigration rules, Sex discrimination 428

Wave power
Energy costs 526-7w
Energy research 527w
Expenditure 525-6w
Norway 526w

Weedkillers
Abortion 1010
Alachlor 880

Weetch, Mr Ken
Questions
Asbestos, Waste disposal 880
Family practitioner committees 94w
Family practitioner committees, Accounting 94-5w
Family practitioner committees, Suffolk 93-4w

Welfare rights officers 587w
Wales 557w

Wells, Mr Bowen
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 318-9
Sri Lanka, Political refugees (03.06.85) 58
Questions
Bosphorus bridge 299
Business statement 446
Ethiopia, Food aid 634-5
Food aid from EC 194-5w
Food aid from EC, Africa 195w
HMS Conqueror, Diaries 295-6w
National Coal Board 7
Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, Overseas aid 299w
Overseas aid, National income 298w
UNESCO 298w

Welsh Office
Cash limits 264w
Civil servants background 91-2w
House of Commons questions 91w

Welsh Water Authority 168w, 264w
Consumer protection 264w

Welwyn
Queen Elizabeth II Hospital 96w

West Bank 298-9w

West Germany
Paraquat 422w

West Midlands
Autism 184w
Community programme 398w
Earned income 67w, 251w
Factory inspectorate 172w
Hospital closures 184w
House renovation grants 878-9
Regional aid 289-90

West Yorkshire Enterprise Board 296

Western Europe
Air fares 621-2
Air transport 622-3
Educational finance 447-8w

Western Isles
Hydrography 467w
Overseas trade 174w

Westland 30 helicopters 178w

Westmoreland Motorway Services 149-50w

Wetlands
Nature conservation 539-40w
Northern Ireland 539-40w

Whales 203w

Wheeler, Mr John
Questions
Drug abuse 386-7w
Prisoners, Nutritional needs 386w

Whitney, Mr Ray, *Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security*
Debates etc
Elderly (06.06.85) 490-3
War pensions (13.06.85) 1117-22
Questions
Attendance allowance, Automatic credit transfer 223w
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Doctors list of patients 427-8w
Board & lodging charges, Members correspondence 181w
Board & lodging charges, Social security recipients 229w
Child benefit, Industrial workers 233w
Company pensions, Early retirement 590w
Dept of Health & Social Security, Departmental publications 358w
Dept of Health & Social Security, Social security abuse 224w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Ethnic minorities 590w
Employers statutory sick pay scheme 546w
Employers statutory sick pay scheme, Costs 585w
Exceptional needs payments 550-1w
Exceptional needs payments, Cookers 358w
Exceptional needs payments, Pensioners 228w
Families, Marginal tax rates 550w
Family income supplements, Children 359w
Family income supplements, Islington 101w
Housing benefits, Lambeth 585-6w
Housing benefits, Private rented housing 93w
Housing benefits, Students 364w
National insurance contributions 480w
National insurance contributions, Prosecutions 365w
Nursing homes, Members correspondence 139w, 181w
One parent families, Travelling expenses 551w
Pirate radio stations, Advertising 96-7w
"Reform of Social Security Consultation paper", Costs 362w
"Reform of Social Security Consultation paper", Rate rebates 362w
Residential care, Supplementary benefits 544-5w
Retirement pensions, British residents abroad 546w
Retirement pensions, Islington 101w
Retirement pensions, Newham 236w
Single homeless, Hartlepool 584w
Social security abuse 223-4w
Social security abuse, Departmental forms 181w
Social security abuse, Police 226w
Social security abuse, Police records 181w, 226w
Social security benefits, Children 228w
Social security benefits rules, Fuel bills 589-90w
Social security payments, Banks 591w
Social security recipients 479w
Social security recipients, Housing benefits 360w
Social security recipients, Islington 101w
Social security recipients, Newham 235-6w
Social security recipients, Water charges 238w
Specialist claims control units 546w
Specialist claims control units, Scotland 546w
State earnings related pension scheme, Earnings related supplement 240-1w, 591w
State earnings related pension scheme, Pensioners 241w
State occupational pensions 104w
Supplementary benefits 228w
Supplementary benefits, Board & lodging charges 363-4w, 546-7w
Supplementary benefits, Exceptional circumstances additions 235w
Supplementary benefits, Exceptional needs payments 478w
Supplementary benefits, Islington 101w
Supplementary benefits, Pensioners 235w
Supplementary benefits, Students 364w
Supplementary benefits disregards of income 588-9w
Unemployed, Social security benefits disqualification 427w
Unemployment benefits, Newham 236w
Unemployment benefits, Southwark 106w
Young people, Social security benefits disqualification 366w
Young people, Social security benefits reductions 365-6w
Youth unemployment, Supplementary benefits 362w

Whooping cough 182-3w
Infant mortality 182-3w

Widdicombe Committee 455w

Wiggin, Mr Jerry
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 903
Unborn Children (Protection) Bill 1984/85, Public petitions (07.06.85) 603-4
Questions
Defence contracts, Helicopters 149w
Westland 30 helicopters 178w

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Debates etc
Ambulance services, Public petitions (07.06.85) 600
By election writs, Brecon & Radnor (07.06.85) 554, 555-9, 572
Rural areas, Wales (04.06.85) 163
Questions
Animal experiments, Draize test 86w
Business statement 445-6
Welfare rights officers 587w
Welfare rights officers, Wales 557w

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 456w
Public footpaths 456w

Wildlife & Countryside (Amendment) (No 2) Bill 1984/85
(10.06.85) 639

Wilkins, Steven Alfred (14.06.85) 1123

Wilkinson, Mr John
Debates etc
Defence Estimates (12.06.85) 904-5, (13.06.85) 1038, 1053, 1057
Questions

Air routes, Australia 197w
Air routes, Philippine Airlines 196w
Air transport competition 621-2
Philippines, Ethnic minorities 107w

William of Orange
Anniversaries 490w

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc
Rolls-Royce, Press releases (04.06.85) 155
Questions
British Leyland 291
Industrial training 294

Wilson, Mr Gordon
Debates etc
Family Law (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep & 3R (03.06.85) 117-8
Higher education (04.06.85) 210, 224-7
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, Com & rem stages (05.06.85) 340
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 19-20
Community programme, Dundee 415w
Kilroot Power Station 999
Limited list prescribing, Costs 363w
Offshore drilling 194w
Teacher training, Scotland 534w
Unemployment 121-2w
Unemployment, Scotland 135-6w
Youth unemployment, Scotland 136w

Wind power
Energy research 5
Tax credits 5

Winfrith
Nuclear power stations 11-2

Winnick, Mr David
Questions
Business statement 1017
Civil service unions 17
Private rented housing 456w
Regional aid, West Midlands 290
Rent control, Private rented housing 885

Winter, Jacqueline (05.06.85) 374-5

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Debates etc
Sanitaryware, Belgium (10.06.85) 730-2
Questions
Childbirth, Anaesthetics 434w
Police, Manpower 425
Small businesses, Secondary education 173w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Business question time point of order (13.06.85) 1022
Questions
Armed forces local overseas allowance 146
Business statement 1019
House renovation grants 883

Women
Body searches 368-9w
Prison sentences 80w, 82-3w
Remand in custody 79w, 83w
United Nations 272w

Womens National Cancer Control Campaign 430w

Womens prisons
Holloway Prison 207-8w
Prison administration 493-4w
Psychiatry 493w

Wood, Mr Timothy
Questions
Value added network services, Licensing 190w

Wood preservatives 56w, 355w, 578-9w
Hazardous materials 578-9w
Poisoning 56w

Woodall, Mr Alec
Debates etc
Handicapped (10.06.85) 681

Woolwich Arsenal 423w
Pest control 423w

Woolwich ferry 372w

Working hours
Junior hospital doctors 588w
Railway workers 374w

World Health Organisation
Pesticide residues 580w

World War I 304w
Royal British Legion 304w

Wrigglesworth, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Science & technology policy (14.06.85) 1181-3
Wages councils (06.06.85) 528-31
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 3
British Leyland 292
Civil service, Pay 18
Small firms service 289

Written questions
Speakers rulings & statements (04.06.85) 155, (05.06.85) 306

X rays
Hospital waiting lists 432w

Yarnton weed research laboratory 422w

Yelland Power Station 563w
Radioactive waste disposal 563w

Yeo, Mr Tim
Debates etc
Handicapped (10.06.85) 664, 670-4
Questions
Animal experiments 207w
Armed forces, British citizenship 139
Business statement 1018
Charity Commission, Cash limits 561w
House renovation grants 889
Monopolies & Mergers Commission, British Railways Board 183-4w
Private rented housing, Rent Acts 456w
Security, Northern Ireland 535w
Small businesses, Audit 134w
Social security reviews 437-8
Unemployment, Statistics 741-2
Wind power, Energy research 5

Yorkshire & Humberside
Community industry scheme 520-1w

Yorkshire Ripper 587w

Yorkshire Water Authority Bill 1984/85
2R order read (06.06.85) 423

Young, Mr David
Debates etc
Airports (05.06.85) 319

Young, Sir George, *Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc
Water supply, Ministerial statements (06.06.85) 449-56
Young people, Newham (03.06.85) 130-6
Questions
Asbestos, Faslane 50-1w, 124w, 203w
Asbestos cement, Imports 317-8w
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Homelessness 267w
Building regulations 411w
Building regulations, Small businesses 318-23w
Computers in government departments, Dept of the Environment 53w, 127w
Construction, Safety measures 203-4w
Council house sales, Bolton 887
Council house waiting lists, Board & lodging charges 513w
Council housing, Ethnic minorities 460w
Council housing, Housing improvement 266-7w
Council housing, London boroughs 32w
Crown Suppliers, Motor vehicles 32w
Government grants to local authorities, Housing insulation 44-6w
Greater London Council, Council housing 35-6w
House renovation grants, 42w, 877-9, 882-3
House renovation grants, Rotherham 879
House renovation grants, Stockport 563w
House renovation grants, Waltham Forest 878
House renovation grants, West Midlands 878-9
Housing, Capital investment 268w
Housing completions, Elderly 43w
Housing construction, North West region 891
Housing improvement 49w
Housing improvement, Expenditure 462w
Housing improvement, Local government 204w
Housing standards 49w, 883-4
Housing standards, Scotland 882-3
Housing & elderly, Housing Corporation 205w
Housing & handicapped, Local government expenditure 464w
Inner city areas, Social problems 204w
Land acquisition 49w
Local government reform, Voluntary organisations 34w
London docklands, Airports 52w
London docklands, Owner occupied housing 53w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Employment opportunities 410w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Land values 53w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Owner occupied housing 323w
Management consultants, Dept of the Environment 54w
Mobile homes, Rents 460w
Mount Pleasant Airport, Expenditure 161w
Multiple occupation 33-4w
Multiple occupation, Control orders 33w
Multiple occupation, Housing improvement 34w
Multiple occupation, Research 34w, 203w
Norman Shaw building, Lifts 457w
Norman Shaw building, Water pollution 411w
Norman Shaw building, Water supply 513w
Public sector housing, Housing starts 42w
Rent acts 48w
Shorthold tenancies 458w
Slum clearance 204w
Slums 267w
Sound insulation, STOLport 269w
St Barnabas Community Centre 463-4w
Tenants exchange scheme 314w
Tenants exchange scheme, Costs 314w
Urban programme, Finance 32-3w
Urban programme, Government grants to local authorities 312w

Young offenders
Detention centres 213w
Prison sentences 495w
Sentencing 302w
Short sharp shock treatment 211w

Young people
Abortion 428-9w
Employment 352-3w
Newham (03.06.85) 127-36
Opposition days (11.06.85) 805-45
Pay 397w, 404w
Social security benefits disqualification 366w
Social security benefits reductions 365-6w
Supplementary benefits 425w
Wages councils 402w

Younger, Rt Hon George, *Secretary of State for Scotland*
Debates etc
Rating (Revaluation Rebates) (Scotland) Bill, 2R (03.06.85) 62-7, 68, 69
Questions
Aberdeen University, Student grants 446-7w
Agricultural machinery, Scotland 445w
Agricultural services, Scotland 445w
Edinburgh District Council, Public inquiries 444w
Forests, Scotland 349w
House of Commons questions, Scottish Office 80w
List D schools, Scotland 253-4w
Rate rebates, Scotland 82w

Rateable value, Scotland 81w
Rating revaluations, Scotland 81w
Scottish Office, Cash limits 447w
Veterinary services, Scotland 445w

Youth custody 213w
Prison population 385w

Youth employment (11.06.85) 805-45
Community industry scheme 399w
Service industries 746-7
Wages councils 399w, 746

Youth training scheme 56-7w, 123w, 276w, 400w, 577w, 741
Confederation of British Industry 400w
Employers associations 400w
Fife 415w
Further education colleges 337-48w
Langbaurgh 744-5
Local education authorities 337-48w
Newham 521-2w
Pay 402w
Scotland 415w
Supplementary benefits 362w, 365-6w

Youth training scheme early leavers 58w, 123w

Youth unemployment 199-200w, 352-3w, 403w, 522w, 744, 746-7
Langbaurgh 744-5
Leicester 747
Newham 199w, 522w
Scotland 136w
Supplementary benefits 362w

Zimbabwe
British citizenship 136-7w

£1 coins 440-1w